

The use of insects to feed dogs and cats

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Summary

The significant increase in the number of dogs and cats in households all over Europe directly influences the pet food market, increasing the high demand for feedstuffs. At the same time, increased awareness among dog owners regarding rational and environmentally sustainable feeding is leading to the search for pet foods containing alternative protein sources, including products obtained from insect biomass. Insect production has a smaller environmental impact than breeding of other livestock animals. This is associated mainly with the use of by-products of the agro-food industry to feed insects, low water consumption, and the possibility of rearing larvae in vertical systems. Invertebrates are a natural source of food in diets for dogs and cats, and their high nutritional value is an argument for their use in industrial feeds. This article collects current information on the use of insect biomass in the diets of dogs and cats and on the market of pet food containing insects. *Hermetia illucens* larvae were shown to be the most commonly used in pet foods, which reflects the trend of insect biomass production and shows the direct advantages of the larvae of this species, associated with its short life cycle, high nutritional value, and content of antimicrobial substances. In addition, studies indicate that insect-based diets for dogs and cats can be used for animals with a high risk of gastroenterological problems and confirm their beneficial effects on the body.

KEY WORDS: insects, dogs, cats, nutrition, feeding