

Guidelines for “Natural” Claims

Natural: A feed or ingredient derived solely from plant, animal or mined sources, either in its unprocessed state or having been subject to physical processing, heat processing, rendering, purification, extraction, hydrolysis, enzymolysis or fermentation, but not having been produced by or subject to a chemically synthetic process and not containing any additives or processing aids that are chemically synthetic except in amounts as might occur unavoidably in good manufacturing practices.

The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) recommends and supports the following guideline for use of the term “natural” in the labeling of commercial feeds, pet foods, and specialty pet foods:

1. In the AAFCO-defined feed term “natural,” the use of the term “natural” is only acceptable in reference to the product as a whole when all of the ingredients and components of ingredients meet the definition.
2. In the definition, the use of the term “natural” is false and misleading if any chemically synthesized ingredients are present in the product; however, AAFCO recommends that exceptions be made in the cases when chemically synthesized vitamins, minerals, or other trace nutrients are present as ingredients in the product, provided that the product is not a dietary supplement and that a disclaimer is used to inform the consumer that the vitamins, minerals or other trace minerals are not natural.

AAFCO recommends that an acceptable use of the disclaimer would appear on the product labeling as:

- A. The disclaimer, such as “Natural with added vitamins, minerals, and other trace nutrients (include the items as appropriate to match the chemically synthesized ingredient(s)),” is juxtaposed with the term “natural”; and
 - B. The disclaimer appears with the largest or most prominent use of the term “natural” on each panel of the label on which the term appears, in the same style and color print and at least one-half the size of the term “natural”; and
 - C. All other ingredients and components of ingredients in the product meet the definition of the AAFCO-approved feed term “natural.”
3. If the disclaimer that is juxtaposed with the term “natural” is used only to identify in generic terms those vitamins, minerals and other trace nutrients which are not natural, AAFCO recommends that the disclaimer should not be construed as a nutrient claim which would warrant vitamin and mineral guarantees. However, if the disclaimer makes reference to a specific nutrient (e.g., “with added calcium”), a guarantee would be warranted.
 4. AAFCO also recommend that exceptions be made when the term “natural” is used only in reference to a specific ingredient (e.g., “natural cheese flavor”), even though the product as a whole may not meet the definition of the AAFCO-defined feed term “natural,” and that the reference does not imply that the product as whole is “natural”.

This information is based on the 2016 AAFCO Official Publication ‘Guideline for “Natural” Claims’.