

# 'Caring about animals means caring about your meat source'

*It's not hard to spot Susan McIntyre when she's out driving around town. That's because she's in a bright pink mini-Cooper covered in paw prints with a dog and cat waving from the back window. Susan is the founder and owner of Playtime Petsitters, a local favorite and winner of dozens of awards. The cheeky title she's given herself – "chief tummy rub officer" – reveals the playful humor she brings to her work. But she's absolutely serious about buying humanely raised meat. That's what first brought her to Ranch Foods Direct and keeps her coming back.*

## HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A RANCH FOODS DIRECT CUSTOMER?

Since I moved here 20 years ago.

## DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT THE STORE?

I can't remember for sure, but it was one of two ways: either through meeting the owner of Gigi's Animal Lovers Gift Shop, in Manitou — she would only buy meat for her dog from Ranch Foods Direct. She was one of first great animal people I met when I moved here. Or the old Cy's Drive-in, when they used to get hamburgers from Ranch Foods Direct.

## DO YOU BUY HUMAN FOOD OR PET FOOD AT RANCH FOODS DIRECT?

So far I've just always bought stuff for me. But I just got back from a national pet sitting and dog walking conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, and they were talking a lot about raw pet food. I thought I knew a lot about pet food, but I learned more about the merits of raw. Next time I'm at Ranch Foods Direct I plan to check that out.

## SO WHAT PRODUCTS DO YOU BUY AT RANCH FOODS DIRECT?

Anything and everything. I know most people focus on the all-natural organic aspect. But my focus is, if I have to eat meat, fish, cheese, and milk, I want as little harm done to the animals as possible. I want it to be humanely raised, cruelty free, and I want to know the animals got to do what they were designed to do and were treated with respect. They shouldn't be kept in conditions where they are pumped full of fear. That's why I go to Ranch Foods Direct. That's why I'm willing to spend 18 times more on pet food than most people do.

## HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT ALL THE BUZZ AROUND EATING MORE PROTEIN?

I actually know more about pet nutrition than human nutrition. Cats are carnivore. They need to eat a very high quantity of protein and very little carbs. It needs to be either canned or raw, but it needs to be wet food. They are designed to tear and swallow. They need more moisture, whereas dry food is ten percent moisture at best. They need to get most of their moisture from their food. Cats that eat dry food are almost always on the verge of dehydration. And I'm learning it's pretty much the same for dogs. In the wild, they do eat a few dry things, but they need moisture. If you can get raw food that's all-natural, high quality, with all the nutrients in it, that is healthiest for their bodies. What started me on this recently was my cat was diagnosed with irritable bowel, and that led me down the path to exploring a raw and goat milk diet. A lot of kitties end up with kidney disease because they don't get enough moist food. It's more expensive, but it's healthier, and you'll have fewer vet bills. And they'll eat less.

## TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS.

About 35 years ago, I started in the pet industry by home-delivering all-natural, holistic, human-grade dog and cat foods. It really does make a difference. I've seen dogs and cats grow their hair back on a healthier diet. From there, it morphed into pet sitting and dog walking. I feel like I got lucky. May 1st will be 29 years, and, I'm 60, so I've been doing this half my life. I've made friends with mice, rats, ferrets, rabbits, horses and goats, you name it. They are all cool, they're all smart, and they have hearts and minds just like people do. Even fish and turtles.

## IS IT HARD TO MEET DEMAND? IS IT GROWING?

I've been at it 29 years, and I have a staff of 18 people. This is all we do for a living. More and more people are going with pet sitters and dog walkers rather than boarding. Most animals are happier, healthier and safer in their own home. At home, they're not catching diseases or infections, which happens even in kennels where they work really hard to avoid it. I'm kind of a workaholic. At the conference I just got back from, I won the contest for personal record for number of visits in one day. Mine was 18 visits. That's when I was starting out, and it was just me. I also won for the longest in business, aka the stubborn old fart award.



For more info go to [PlayTimePetSitters.com](http://PlayTimePetSitters.com)