

DOG FEEDING OPTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

by Tawni McBee All Greatful Dogs, Inc.

A list of suggested foods is included at the end of this article. It is by no means an inclusive list and it is always suggested that dog owners do their research. Dog manufacturers can and do change formulas. Recalls can happen to the best foods.

We rely heavily on the foods suggested in the Whole Dog Journal www.whole-dog-journal.com. In some cases, other meat sources or types from the same brand are just as good as what is on our list. Look at the ingredient listing for comparison. Do research.

Read some or all of the books we have suggested. You'll quickly learn how to spot the problem foods.

A lot has been written about home cooked meals and raw diets, sometimes called a BARF (bones and raw food or biologically appropriate raw food) diet. If you'd like to give one of these a try, please do not start until you've done adequate research. It takes not only intensive preliminary research, but on-going research and a willingness to tweak a diet, willingness to handle raw food, and the patience to deal with it. A few books I would suggest to get started on research:

- 1) any raw diet books by Dr. Ian Billinhurst, DVM
- 2) "Natural Nutrition For Dogs and Cats" by Kymthy Schultz CCN,AHI
- 3) "Holistic Guide For A Healthy Dog" by Volhard (DVM) and Brown
- 4) "Home Prepared Dog & Cat Diets" by Donald R. Strombeck, DVM, PhD

In addition, an excellent website is www.volhard.com. You may want to check out local support and co-op groups as well. Often there are purchasing groups to help off-set the cost. Though most veterinarians are not also canine nutritionists, yours is very knowledgeable about your dog. It's wise to discuss food changes with your veterinarian and vital to discuss it if your dog has special food needs or medical issues.

Remember that foods that are labeled as complete and balanced may or may not actually be guaranteed as complete and balanced, but if it isn't labeled as such, it definitely is not. Most guidelines and testing, such as AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials), are very basic guidelines and may not be tested on a large variety of animals for long periods of time. Watch for high quality, complete meat sources as the first ingredient. It's best if there are no grains or at least they are far down in the ingredients list. Dogs NEED meat. They do not

need grains. The first five ingredients are important. Remember that the ingredients are listed in order of weight in the food. If rice, for example, is listed 3 or more times (in the entire listing) in different forms, it could be that rice would be in the top five if it were simply listed as rice. "Poultry" could be many things. Look for specifics: duck, chicken, etc. Try to steer away from lots of chemicals and additives or artificial colors and flavors. Dogs do not need sweeteners. Dogs need more meat than carbohydrates. Some foods that are toxic to dogs sometimes are included, such as onions and garlic. Look for quality carbohydrates that are good for dogs, such as sweet potatoes, peas, beets, etc. and avoid white potato, garlic, onion, molasses, sugars, alfalfa and sorghum.

I, personally, feed raw bones to my dogs and have for many years (as do many of my colleagues). Most veterinarians will not tell you to feed your dogs bones because there are a variety of things that can go wrong with feeding them. Cooked or weight bearing bones may be hard enough to crack the teeth of some dogs. (I do not feed cooked bones.) Pieces of bone can become an obstruction in the bowel or even perforate the bowel. I am not telling you to feed bones to your dog, but I want you to know the pros and cons of it.

Chewing on bones allows dogs to clean their own teeth. They get enzymes and lots of the chewing that helps calm many dogs. They provide calcium. Chewing on bones is good exercise.

If you are not going to feed bones, you must make sure there is adequate calcium in the diet and provide other appropriate chewing options. Whether you feed bones or not, you should check your dog's teeth routinely, cleaning them once a week at a minimum (daily is best!), checking for gum disease and cracked teeth. Please see your veterinarian for regular cleaning as needed. A healthy mouth is vital for a healthy dog.

If you are going to feed bones, remember to supervise and remove small and/or jagged, sharp pieces. I suggest that you avoid pork bones as they tend to break into sharp pieces. Softest bones are non-weight bearing bones. Best, especially for small dogs, are turkey and chicken necks.

CAUTION: inappropriate bones or unsupervised chewing on bones can cause damage to your dog. Please use extreme caution when giving dogs bones. Bones can crack teeth or cause obstructions or perforations. Feed bones at your own

risk.

We suggest that you feed puppies 3 to 4 times a day and adult dogs twice a day on as much of a schedule as possible. We do not recommend free feeding (leaving a bowl of food available all day long). A first indicator of illness can be a dog refusing food. Food can be an excellent training resource. Free feeding precludes these. We also suggest that foods be rotated. A possible schedule is every three to four months. Change both brands and proteins. This will help balance the dog's diet and help keep allergies at bay. Be sure you work the new food in gradually, over the course of a week or two, to help keep from upsetting the dog's digestive system.

Along with good food, dogs must have fresh, clean water available at all times. (Exceptions may be made if there are housebreaking issues, eliminating water a couple of hours before bedtime to help puppies make it through the night.) Make sure it's in a container that cannot be tipped over and, if outside, is out of the sun. We suggest that you use ceramic or stainless steel pans. Plastic has been found to leach chemicals into food or water left standing in it.

In general, a high quality diet will allow your dog to grow and live a healthy, happy life free from diseases that could be caused by poor diet. It can help keep your visits to your vet as “well-baby” visits rather than treatment of disease. Many dogs fed a better diet live longer lives. Most dogs fed a better diet have shiny coats appropriate to the breed, shed only as their breed is intended to shed and have clean, shiny white teeth (and better breath!).

I cannot stress enough that if your dog has a disease or allergies that require dietary changes, monitoring or a prescription diet, you **MUST** see your veterinarian and work closely with him or her to determine the best diet for your dog. Prescription diets may be important to your dog's health. Your veterinarian will prescribe these if needed and help you find them if they do not have them in stock or help you construct them from commercially available foods or with home-cooking.

Treats may be a part of your dog's intake, but should be taken into consideration as a part of their overall calories. You are cutting your dog's lifespan if you allow them to be over-weight. Carrots and other low calorie items can be treats. The dog's daily kibble can be training treats. If treats are a rare item on your dog's menu, it probably doesn't matter much what they're made of as long as they are quality ingredients, but if you're giving a lot, it's probably best to avoid grains and

sugars. Freeze dried meats make great treats and are available commercially. There are also a number of home-made treat recipes available.

TIDBITS: Dry food is not necessarily better. It can stick to and between teeth.
Canned food is fine.
You might want to add water to kibble.
Pumpkin is great for constipation OR diarrhea!
Probiotics can help during the food changeovers. I use Prozyme.
Use a piece of gauze wrapped around your finger to clean teeth.
Purified fish oil can help a dog's coat and add omega 3 fatty acid.

I am not a veterinarian nor a veterinary nutritionist. This article and the list of suggested foods are provided as a service to our clients and are based on years of research and practical experience with our own dogs as well as consultations with numerous veterinarians and other canine professionals. Your own experience, and that of your veterinarian, with your dog are the basis for the best choices for your dog. In no way is this article intended to replace the advice of your trusted veterinarian.

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A LIST OF BETTER DOG FOODS

provided by All Greatful Dogs, Inc.

This *limited* list is provided as a guideline and suggestion. No claims are made regarding food quality or continuity of formulations. Not all foods are good for all dogs. Your own judgment and that of your vet are invaluable. Foods are listed in alpha and type order. We receive no advertisement fees or kickbacks for listings.

KIBBLE

Artemis
Azmira
Back To Basics
Bench & Field holistic
Blue Buffalo
California Natural
Call of the Wild
Canine Caviar
Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover's Soul
Eagle Pack holistic
Evanger's Super Premium
Evolve
Supply
Flint River Ranch
Go! Natural Chicken
Innova & EVO
Merrick Pet Care
Natural Balance
Newman's Own Organics
Organix
Orijen
Pinnacle
Prairie
Royal Canin Natural and vet formulas
Solid Gold
Wellness
Wysong

CANNED

Azmira
Evangers
Merrick
Solid Gold
Trader Joe's
Wellness
Timberwolf organics

RAW (commercial)

anything carried at Bark Avenue Pet

Some of these foods are available at

- Goober Express www.gooberexpress.com
- Bone Appetit in Ahwatukee

- Bark Avenue www.barkavenuepetsupply.com - 3109 E. McKellips Rd. in Mesa
- Sunflower Pet Supply www.sunflowerpetsupply.com -1840 E. Warner Rd. in Tempe (NE corner of Warner and McClintock, middle of the strip) carry only high quality foods and the staff is well versed at helping customers pick out food for their pets.

Please let them know your dog trainer sent you.