

Canine Nutrition for Health and Temperament

I have an interest in nutrition and passionately share what I have gleaned through reading, consulting with holistic veterinarians, and personal experience with a dog with food allergies. I discovered that corn, wheat and by-products which make food less expensive and give the maker a higher margin of profit. What is wrong with corn anyway? Corn is a cheap protein. It is NOT natural in a canine's diet, it is a "hot" food which can contribute to anxiety, aggression, hyper activity, and hot spots, and skin allergies. Some experts believe that you should change brands once a year or so. Since no brand is perfect or has it all, this allows your dog to receive different levels of nutrients from a different brand. I also want to make sure my dog has enzymes available from food with moisture (certain fruits and vegetables, yogurt/cottage cheese, cooked or raw meat).

Your dog's water dish should be made out of stainless steel or glass (who knew?!). Plastic and glazed pottery have an unhealthy interaction with water. Some dogs actually develop sores around their mouth from plastic dishes. Most people know that chocolate can be deadly for dogs. You may not know that you should avoid feeding your dog grapes, raisins, onions, or large quantities of garlic.

A spoonful of plain regular (4% fat) yogurt or cottage cheese (NOT nonfat) can aid in digestion (enzymes/cultures) and add healthy living protein. I give my dog a spoonful each evening with his meal. "Nancy's" is a great brand available at QFC or the natural food section of Fred Meyer. Safeway sells Mountain High. Also, Trader Joe's brand French Village Plain cream line yogurt (4% milk) is great. I have found that dogs have less diarrhea and gas when they consume a little yogurt, pumpkin or cottage cheese each day.

Canines in the wild eat mostly raw meat protein along with a small amount of grain and vegetation, partially digested, from their prey's stomach. There are commercial raw diets available at better pet food stores, usually frozen. Some people make their own. Google "B.A.R.F." for more information. It is an acronym for "bones and raw food". Raw can be a little more expensive and more complicated. It is not for every dog or family. You need to take care to wash the food bowl after every meal and take extra care if you have small children or elderly in the home. Always thaw raw meat for dogs in the fridge or under hot water. Do NOT feed it frozen.

Consider giving your dog a raw egg every other day. Also, a small amount of finely chopped apple or banana, blueberries or strawberries are fine for dogs. Carrots or broccoli that are slightly cooked or put in the blender or food processor are excellent. I give my dog a few thawed out fresh/frozen green beans. Canines cannot digest raw vegetables that are not ground up. It won't harm them; it will just pass through undigested.

Dry/Canned Dog Food. If you feed kibble or canned, please check the ingredients, especially the top 5. All of my clients think they are feeding their dogs a good brand but many of them are amazed to discover that their brand with the wonderful commercials and advertising on TV is substandard (and their breeder or vet recommended it!?). **Avoid fillers such as meat by-products, wheat, or corn.** They are used to decrease the price but add no nutritional value.

If you switch to a premium brand your dog will:

1. Eat a smaller amount of food which means the bag will last much longer
2. Have smaller, firmer, and often less frequent waste....i.e. poop less ...Yippee!
3. Have less vet bills
4. Be better behaved (less anxiety, aggression, and hyperactivity)
5. Look better and feel better and live longer!

When switching brands or types of dog food, spend a week getting your dog's digestive system a chance to adjust to a new food, giving less of the old brand and more of the new type over the course of a week.

Example, if your dog eats a cup of food a day then:

day 1 and 2 give $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of old and $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cup of new food., day 3 and 4, give $\frac{1}{2}$ old and $\frac{1}{2}$ new, day 5, 6 and 7 give $\frac{3}{4}$ cup new and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of old food. After a week you can give your dog a full portion of new food.

Monitor your dog's weight to see if you need to adjust portion.

Supplements: I give my dog **Bug Off garlic granules by Springtime for flea prevention, fish oil, and glucosamine/MSM.**

There are many excellent brands out there if you know what to look for and where to go. Here are a few brands of dog food that I like:

Cobber's Pet Pantry in Enumclaw carries high quality dog foods such as GO! and has knowledgeable staff.

Mudbay has some great foods as well.

Solid Gold available at Kason's and Petco

Nature's Variety Prairie available at Reber Ranch

Natures Domain Grain Free at Costco

Blue Buffalo available at Petsmart

Is your dog at his/her ideal weight? Make sure to keep an eye on your dog's waistline. The amount your dog needs to eat will be less than what the bag tells you to feed. The bag gives a ball park amount but each dog's caloric needs vary based on age, metabolism and energy level, exercise etc. Also, the dog food company is trying to sell dog food, so they may embellish the amounts on the back of the bag. Another indication of if you are feeding the right type and amount of food is how many times a day your dog has a bowl movement. Generally speaking, most adult dogs poop twice a day (puppies more often). If your adult dog has more than this, it can be an indication that he is eating a brand with fillers or too large of a quantity. There are exceptions to this, such as a dog that is extremely active or has a really fast metabolism. The best way to know if your dog is getting the right amount of food is to ask your vet, trainer, or other pet professional. **ASK!** They won't necessarily tell you. Many people get offended and defensive when the vet tells them their dog is overweight. So they don't always volunteer the information.

Once your dog is about 6-9 months old, if you look from above, can you see a waistline going in? This is difficult to see on a Husky or other very furry breed. Another way to measure: if you push gently on your dog's ribcage with your palms flat, can you feel ribs? An overweight dog is likely to have more health problems, more trouble jumping into vehicles and moving in general, especially as they age. An overweight dog will age much faster and have a shortened lifespan. Don't kill your dog with kindness!

www.OneGoodDog.org