

Should Fido be on a Diet? Which Foods are Healthiest for Him?

Every dog deserves a healthy diet and balanced nutritional program. What is the best food for your dog? This will depend upon your pet's age, size, overall health, activity level, ancestry, breed characteristics and weight. An exam followed by a detailed consultation with your veterinarian will help you to determine the best (healthiest) food plan for your dog. Does your pet have any health issues that may require or benefit from a specialized diet? Is he overweight? Does he have digestive problems? Does he have kidney, liver or heart disease? Does he suffer from osteoarthritis or hip dysplasia? If so, he may have nutritional needs that may not only keep her healthy but alive!

As you may surmise, a healthy diet is in and of itself not enough to keep your pet happy and healthy. He may require medication and/or vitamins or supplements. He requires plenty of good, clean, fresh water. He also requires exercise, playtime, and interaction. He will also need to be obedience trained and socialized so that he will be a happy, healthy, loved and well behaved member and representative of your family.

So what is the best food for your dog? Actually, it is the fresh food you buy at the grocery store for yourself and other family members. Fresh chicken, turkey, beef and fish are as good for your pets as they are for you! Don't confuse these fresh foods (which benefit many living creatures) with such people "food" as table scraps, ice cream, cookies, candies, pizza, hot dogs, French Fries, barbecued ribs etc.) Fresh food can include yogurt, cottage cheese, oatmeal, eggs and brown rice- even fruit such as apple or orange slices, bits of banana or veggies such as carrots or green beans.

Keep in mind that up until the 1930's when cereal and grain manufacturers began to seek to make a profit out of their inferior or rejected grains and cereals (those deemed of insufficient quality for humans), dogs were fed real meat and vegetables and a little homemade bread – a diet on which they thrived. . Much of the dog kibble (which is processed and artificial) as we know it today was created for the benefit and profit of the cereal and grain industries and pet food industries. It allowed them to make money out of "inferior" products. Many of the canned meat and meat byproducts sold as dog food have existed almost entirely for the profitability of meat and pet food corporations.

I highly suggest that you as consumer and pet guardian carefully examine the ingredients of all packaged and canned pet foods. Do they contain chemicals, artificial flavorings and ingredients? Do they contain corn, wheat, soybeans, artificial flavorings which can prove dangerous to your pet – chemicals- any of which can contribute to your pet's chronic digestive problems such as vomiting, gasiness, diarrhea or loose stools? These ingredients can also result in other health-related problems including skin and also behavioral issues. There are plenty of wonderful pet foods (dry and wet). available in the market. It is up to you and your vet to determine which are of greatest benefit and value to your particular pet.

Many pet food manufacturers create healthy, natural, fresh and nutritional products. It is important for us to find out which are the most beneficial and those that are least

nutritionally beneficial for our canine companions. The heartbreaking and massive pet food recalls that occurred several years ago remind us that we must do our homework and conduct our own research as to which diets and foods are healthiest for our pets. We cannot simply accept the “information” provided through heartwarming television or radio commercials or magazine ads informing us that certain pet foods will improve the health and increase the longevity of our pets’ lives. We really have to pay attention and think for ourselves!

Like our human children, and us our pets deserve wholesome, nutritious, fresh and healthy foods. They are vulnerable and depend upon us to find it and feed it to them. As their caregivers, we owe it to them to pay attention not only to their dietary needs, but also to their nutritional requirements, medical, physical and weight management needs. After all, we do exercise “dominion” – meaning care of and responsibility for the needs and well being of our animal companions.