



Nutrition for Optimal Dog Health

1. *Reduce or eliminate dry food (kibble).*
 2. *Aim for at least 50% freshly cooked or raw/dehydrated foods.*
 3. *Use a variety of meat protein and brands.*
 4. *Select appropriate protein sources and whole-food nutritional supplements for your dog's unique needs.*
-

Recommended Commercial Diets

Raw

Primal
Answers
Nature's Variety *Instinct*
Stella and Chewy's
Small Batch
Feed This
Darwin's
Excel Pet Pantry
Northwest Naturals
Bones and Company

Dehydrated

Dr. Harvey's
Honest Kitchen
SOJOS
Ziwi Peak

Dry/Canned

Nature's Variety *Instinct*
PureVida
Nulo
Fromm
Open Farm
Blue Wilderness
Zignature
Orijen/Acana
Wysong Epigen
Wellness Core
Nature's Domain
Koha (canned only)

Food Energetics

Cool

Turkey, Duck,
White Fish, Rabbit,
Pheasant, Quail

Neutral to Warm

Chicken, Beef,
Bison, Buffalo

Warm to Hot

Venison, Lamb,
Kangaroo

Supplements and Resources

Vitamin/Mineral

Standard Process Whole Body Support
RX Vitamins Nutritional Support
Mushroom Matrix Healthy Pet

Omega 3 Fatty Acids

Nordic Naturals Omega 3 Pet
Nordic Naturals Cod Liver Oil
Omega QD

Joint Health

PolyChews
Phycoc
Standard Process Musculoskeletal Support

Dental Health

VetriScience Perio Chews
Plaque Off
Standard Process BioDent

Stores

Bark Avenue (Rocklin, El Dorado Hills, Rancho Cordova
S'Barkles (Folsom)
Ben's Barketplace (Citrus Heights, Roseville)
Animal Nutrition Center (Roseville)
Incredible Pets (Sacramento, Carmichael, Auburn)
Pet Food Express (Sacramento, Roseville)

1. HOW CAN I TELL IF A PET FOOD IS HIGH QUALITY? If a food contains any of the following, it is generally low quality and **should be avoided**: Corn/Corn Gluten, Wheat/Wheat Gluten, Soy, Meat By-Products, Preservatives (BHA, BHT, Ethoxyquin), Artificial Coloring, Sugar, Generic Fats (“Animal Fat”). Look for foods that contain whole food fruits and vegetables.

2. WHICH DOGS SHOULD BE FED GRAIN-FREE FOODS? Most dogs do well on grain-free diets as they are more biologically appropriate than those high in grains. Dogs with allergies, cancer or obesity can especially benefit from a grain-free diet. Keep in mind that these diets are generally higher in protein and fat and are therefore more “dense” than other types of kibbles. You may feed up to 25% less by volume compared to standard dog kibble.

3. WILL CANNED OR SOFT FOOD MAKE MORE TARTAR ON MY DOGS’ TEETH AS COMPARED TO DRY FOOD? **NO.** Increased tartar buildup caused by wet food is, in my experience, a common misconception. I cannot say that I see a significant difference in teeth of animals on canned vs. dry foods. Because canned foods are less processed than dry kibble, the health benefits far outweigh the “risk” of possible tartar buildup.

4. DO YOU RECOMMEND RAW DIETS? **YES, IN MOST CASES.** Raw foods have higher levels of enzymes which means that your dog will absorb more nutrients (vitamins, minerals) from the food. **The benefits of raw diets include more energy and vitality, fewer allergies, less tartar build-up, smaller and less “stinky” stools, easier weight management and healthier skin and coats.** I do NOT recommend raw diets for animals under one year of age, geriatric, or sick pets

5. ARE RAW DIETS SAFE? As with any raw meat, there is a small risk of bacterial contamination, so safe food handling techniques are recommended. However, proponents of raw food diets argue that a dog’s digestive tract is better suited to handle higher bacterial loads than a human’s due to a higher stomach acidity and shorter intestinal length. In my career to date I have not seen any adverse effects or illnesses related to feeding a raw diet. Many raw commercial diets now use a “high pressure pasteurization” process to further reduce any risk of bacterial contamination in the diets.

6. IS IT OK TO FEED MY DOG TABLE SCRAPS? **YES, IN MOST CASES.** Unless your dog has a sensitive stomach and develops diarrhea easily with diet changes. Supplementing commercial diets with fresh, whole foods is an easy way to increase the quality of your dogs’ diet. Examples of acceptable “table scraps” include lean, simply cooked meats without sauces or heavy spices, cooked or pureed raw veggies and fruits (**AVOID ONIONS, GRAPES, CITRUS and TOMATO**). In general, I do not advocate feeding grains unless specifically discussed on a case-by-case basis.

7. CAN I MAKE MY OWN PET FOOD? **YES.** Home-cooked diets are a wonderful way to incorporate whole, fresh foods into your pet’s diet. Generally speaking, dogs should receive up to 1/3 volume grains (optional), 1/3 meat and 1/3 vegetables. If fed over the long-term these diets should be carefully formulated in order to be balanced. See your veterinarian for more details on balancing a home-made diet with a multivitamin, calcium and essential fats.

8. SHOULD I FEED THE SAME PET FOOD CONTINUALLY? **NO.** There is no perfect diet for dogs and each animal has unique nutritional needs. If you feed commercial food, I recommend rotating high quality brands and protein sources (unless otherwise discussed). Many food intolerances and allergies are caused by overfeeding one particular type of protein.

9. DO YOU RECOMMEND THAT MY PET TAKE VITAMINS? **YES.** There is no such thing as an optimally balanced diet, whether you are feeding raw, kibble, dehydrated or home-cooked foods. Furthermore, every animal has unique nutritional needs. Therefore, I strongly recommend that, in addition to a rotational diet as explained in #7 above, that you supplement your pet’s diet with a whole food vitamin/mineral product.

10. ARE THERE ANY OTHER SUPPLEMENTS MY DOG SHOULD TAKE? **POSSIBLY.** Depending on your pet’s age, breed environment and current health status, there may be nutritional supplements that can prevent or improve current health issues.

11. WHY SHOULD I GIVE MY DOG EXTRA OMEGA-3 FATS? These “good” fats are naturally anti-inflammatory and help with **allergies, skin problems, kidney and heart disease, eye and joint health** and boost immune function. They also have potent **anti-cancer** properties. Use only high quality, purified forms of fish oil for dogs because oil from ocean fish is contaminated with heavy metals and other toxins. Omega 3 fats from flax seed oil is not absorbed well in dogs. Freshness is also important as these oils become rancid quickly. **Keep these refrigerated** if in liquid form.

12. WHAT DO JOINT SUPPORT PRODUCTS (GLUCOSAMINE/MSM/CHONDROITIN) DO?

These are substances that nourish and **protect the joint cartilage and joint fluid**, providing both an anti-inflammatory effect as well as protecting the cartilage from degradation. They are most beneficial for preventative use or for animals with mild to moderate arthritis. Some commercial pet foods add glucosamine or chondroitin to the foods, but the amounts are not high enough to be very therapeutic.

13. WHAT ARE SOME EARLY SIGNS OF HEALTH IMBALANCES IN DOGS THAT COULD SIGNAL A NEED FOR INCREASED NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTATION?

- **SKIN/COAT CHANGES:** “Doggy” smell; attracts fleas a lot; dry, oily, or lack-luster coat; excessive shedding; poor grooming; ear problems; eye discharge; brittle/dry nails
- **DIGESTIVE:** “Sensitive stomach”; bad breath despite recent dental cleaning; poor appetite; eating non-food items (feces, dirt, plastic, rocks, etc); vomiting often; mucous on stools; obesity; anal gland problems; recurrent worms
- **JOINT/MUSCLE:** Stiffness when getting up; decreased activity; difficulty going up or down steps