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January 2006 ©

Diet guide for domestic dogs and cats

Dingos and feral cats keep themselves healthy by eating whole carcasses of prey animals. Ideally we should feed our pets in the same manner. Until a dependable source of whole carcasses becomes available, pet owners need a satisfactory alternative. The following recommendations, based on raw meaty bones, have been adopted by thousands of pet owners with excellent results.

The diet is easy to follow and cheap, and pets enjoy it.

- Fresh water constantly available.
- Raw meaty bones (or carcasses if available) should form the bulk of the diet.
- Table scraps both cooked and raw (grate or liquidise vegetables, *discard cooked bones*).

Puppies and kittens

From about three weeks of age puppies and kittens start to take an interest in what their mother is eating. By six weeks of age they can eat chicken carcasses, rabbits and fish.

During the brief interval between three and six weeks of age it is advisable to provide minced chicken, chicken carcasses or similar for young animals (as well as access to larger pieces that encourage ripping and tearing). This is akin to the part-digested food regurgitated by wild carnivore mothers. Large litters will need more supplementary feeding than small litters. (The meat and bone should be minced together. Meat off the bone can be fed, but only for a short time, until the young animals can eat meat and bone together — usually about six weeks of age.)

Between four and six months of age puppies and kittens cut their permanent teeth and grow rapidly. At this time they need a plentiful supply of carcasses or raw meaty bones of suitable size.

Puppies and kittens tend not to overeat natural food. Food can be continuously available.

Natural foods suitable for pet carnivores

Raw meaty bones

- Chicken and turkey carcasses, after the meat has been removed for human consumption, are suitable for dogs and cats.
- Poultry by-products include: heads, feet, necks and wings.
- Whole fish and fish heads.
- Goat, sheep, calf, deer and kangaroo carcasses can be sawn into large pieces of meat and bone.
- Other by-products include: pigs' trotters, pigs' heads, sheep heads, brisket, tail bones, rib bones.

Whole carcasses

- Rats, mice, rabbits, fish, chickens, quail, hens.

Offal

- Liver, lungs, trachea, hearts, omasums (stomach of ruminants), tripe.

Quality — Quantity — Frequency

Healthy animals living and breeding in the wild depend on the correct *quality* of food in the right *quantity* at a correct *frequency*. They thereby gain an appropriate nutrient intake plus the correct amount of teeth cleaning — animals, unlike humans, 'brush' and 'floss' as they eat.

Quality

Low-fat game animals and fish and birds provide the best source of food for pet carnivores. If using meat from farm animals (cattle, sheep and pigs) avoid excessive fat, or bones that are too large to be eaten.

Dogs are more likely to break their teeth when eating large knuckle bones and bones sawn lengthwise than if eating meat and bone together.

Raw food for cats should always be fresh. Dogs can consume 'ripe' food and will sometimes bury bones for later consumption.

Quantity

Establishing the quantity to feed pets is more an art than a science. Parents, when feeding a human family, manage this task without the aid of food consumption charts. You can achieve the same good results for your pet by paying attention to activity levels, appetite and body condition.

High activity and big appetite indicate a need for increased food, and vice versa.

Body condition depends on a number of factors. The overall body shape — is it athletic or rotund — and the lustre of the hair coat provide clues. Use your finger tips to assess the elasticity of the skin. Does it have an elastic feel and move readily over the muscles? Do the muscles feel well toned? And how much coverage of the ribs do you detect? This is the best place to check whether your pet is too thin or too fat. By comparing your own rib cage with that of your pet you can obtain a good idea of body condition — both your own and that of your pet.

An approximate food consumption guide, based on raw meaty bones, for the average pet cat or dog is 15 to 20 percent of body weight in one week or 2 to 3 percent per day. On that basis a 25 kilo dog requires up to five kilos of carcasses or raw meaty bones weekly. Cats weighing five kilos require about one kilo of chicken necks, fish, rabbit or similar each week. Table scraps should be fed as an extra component of the diet. Please note that these figures are only a guide and relate to adult pets in a domestic environment.

Pregnant or lactating females and growing puppies and kittens may need much more food than adult animals of similar body weight.

Wherever possible, feed the meat and bone ration in one large piece requiring much ripping, tearing and gnawing. This makes for contented pets with clean teeth.

Frequency

Wild carnivores feed at irregular intervals. In a domestic setting regularity works best and accordingly I suggest that you feed adult dogs and cats once daily. If you live in a hot climate I recommend that you feed pets in the evening to avoid attracting flies.

I suggest that on one or two days each week your dog may be fasted — just like animals in the wild.

On occasions you may run out of natural food. Don't be tempted to buy artificial food, fast your dog and stock up with natural food the next day.

Puppies, cats, ferrets, sick or underweight dogs should not be fasted (unless on veterinary advice).

Table scraps

Wild carnivores eat small amounts of omnivore food, part-digested in liquid form, when they eat the intestines of their prey. Our table scraps, and some fruit and vegetable peelings, are omnivore food which has not been ingested. Providing scraps do not form too great a proportion of the diet they appear to do no harm and may do some good. I advise an upper limit of one-third scraps for dogs and rather less for cats. Liquidising scraps, both cooked and raw, in the kitchen mixer may help to increase their digestibility.

Things to avoid

- Excessive meat off the bone — not balanced.
- Excessive vegetables — not balanced.
- Small pieces of bone — can be swallowed whole and get stuck.
- Cooked bones — get stuck.
- Mineral and vitamin additives — create imbalance.
- Processed food — leads to dental and other diseases.
- Excessive starchy food — associated with bloat.
- Onions, garlic and chocolate — toxic to pets.
- Grapes, raisins, sultanas, currants — toxic to pets.

- Fruit stones (pits) and corn cobs — get stuck.
- Milk — associated with diarrhoea. Animals drink it whether thirsty or not and consequently get fat. Milk sludge sticks to teeth and gums.

Take care

- Old dogs and cats addicted to a processed diet may experience initial difficulty when changed on to a natural diet.
- Pets with misshapen jaws and dental disease may experience difficulties with a natural diet.
- Create variety. Any nutrients fed to excess can be harmful.
- Liver is an excellent foodstuff but should not be fed more than once weekly.
- Other offal, e.g. ox stomachs, should not exceed 50 percent of the diet.
- Whole fish are an excellent source of food for carnivores, but avoid feeding one species of fish constantly. Some species, e.g. carp, contain an enzyme which destroys thiamine (vitamin B1).
- There are no prizes for the fattest dog on the block, nor for the fastest. Feed pets for a lifetime of health. Prevention is better than cure.

Miscellaneous tips

Domestic dogs and cats are carnivores. Feeding them the appropriate carnivore diet represents the single most important contribution to their welfare.

Establish early contact with a dependable supplier of foodstuffs for pet carnivores.

Buy food in bulk in order to avoid shortages.

Package the daily rations separately for ease of feeding.

Refrigerated storage space, preferably a freezer, is essential.

Raw meaty bones can be fed frozen just like ice cream. Some pets eat the frozen article; others wait for it to thaw.

Small carcasses, for example rats, mice and small birds, can be fed frozen and complete with entrails. Larger carcasses should have the entrails removed before freezing.

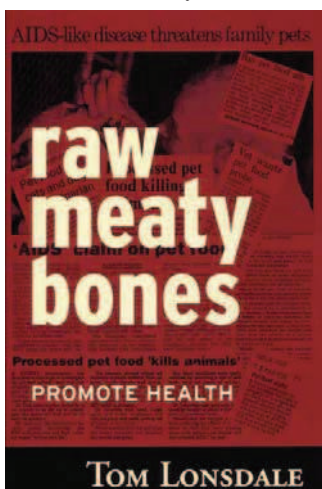
Take care that pets do not fight over their food.

Protect children by ensuring that they do not disturb feeding pets.

Feeding bowls are unnecessary — the food will be dragged across the floor — so feed pets outside by preference, or on an easily cleaned floor.

Ferrets are small carnivores which can be fed in the same way as cats.

For an expanded description of dietary requirements, including the potential hazards, please consult the books *Raw Meaty Bones: Promote Health* and *Work Wonders: Feed your dog raw meaty bones*.



Further information, links and *RMB Newsletters*:

<http://www.rawmeatybones.com>

IMPORTANT: Note that individual animals and circumstances may vary. You may need to discuss your pet's needs with your veterinarian.

This diet guide may be freely copied and circulated.

