



Homemade Guidelines

The first thing to say when it comes to making food for your pet is that anyone can do this. The pet food companies and most conventional Veterinarians want you to believe you aren't smart enough. But, really you are. It will require an education and then time invested in preparation or cooking. If you are the type who needs a book, then go ahead and buy a book, there are plenty of them out there. More than I can read or recommend. I've included some resources at the end of this handout. Since every animal is an individual I don't usually recommend specific recipes. This is not necessarily a tutorial on raw foods either. This is about homemade/doing it yourself and eliminating processed food. This is about good nutrition-yours and your pets. We grew up learning about the 5 food groups, we all know what they are, and how much to eat of each for a balanced diet. If you eat out of a box, can, and take out menu, then you probably need just as much help as your pet does. There are only a few basics you need to know to adapt what you eat to what they need. Basically, there are 2 main principles: proportions, and balanced nutrients. You know the proportions for yourself, and you can learn the proportions for them. You achieve a balanced diet through eating a varied diet. When you feel unsure of your diet's balance or have additional nutritional requirements you take a vitamin that suits your needs, this same approach goes for your pets.

The pet food pyramids

Dogs

Fruit
Fish
Grains
Vegetables
Bones Calcium
Meat Meat Meat

Cats

Fruit
Veggies
Fish Fish
Bones Calcium Bones
Meat Meat Meat Meat

Proportions

We will start with proportions. We are omnivores, a fact attested to by the shape, number and size of our teeth. Cats and dogs are carnivores, a fact supported by a display of their teeth in our local Natural History museum. Where we should eat mostly fruits and vegetables, some grain, and a small amount of meat on the other hand dogs and cats will have differing proportional requirements. Dogs should have about 40% meat by volume, and 60% vegetable matter by volume. This actually turns out to be 60-75% meat by weight because the meat is very heavy compared to the vegetable. For example 1 cup ground turkey to 1 ½ cups ground/pulverized vegetables. In other words for a medium to large dog you can roughly double your meat portion and halve your vegetable portion. Cats should have mostly meat, the commercial prepared raw foods have 85% meat by weight. Because cats have some fairly specific needs the discussion here will be mostly limited to dogs. A great in depth discussion on cat nutrition can be found at the following web site: www.catinfo.org/makingcatfood.htm by Dr. Lisa Pierson. The quality and completeness of the information on her web site is so amazing I couldn't possibly do better rewriting it.

Balanced Nutrients

The next concept to grasp is that of a balanced diet. Ideally you get a balanced diet by having a varied diet. Most of us are woefully deficient in doing that for ourselves and make up for it by taking a multivitamin. You can do the same thing for your pet. In fact if you were to use one Flintstones Vitamin per meal for a medium to large breed dog you have provided more quality in a vitamin mix than what is actually used in standard processed pet kibble-ouch. But, preferably you could use a variety of much better animal Vitamins or green supplements.

Calcium: Another very important point on balance has to do with calcium. Since the higher meat will have a higher amount of phosphorus you must balance it out with calcium or the high levels of phosphorus will damage the kidneys. So you need to feed raw bones, Pressure cooked, softened bones, bone meal, or a calcium supplement daily. About 500 to 1200 mg of calcium per meal or 1 teaspoon food grade (not gardening) bone meal for a medium to large breed dog. This is a very general ballpark amount because the phosphorus levels vary with the type of protein used.

Meat: Theoretically, you can use any meat raw. I tend not to use raw pork because this is the only meat that can potentially contain the parasite trichonella. Meats can also be cooked. They are easiest mix with veggies and to use raw if they have been ground already. You can use chicken, turkey, beef, and specialty meats like ostrich, bison, elk, rabbit, etc. You can get your own grinder to grind the meat and bones together. Some butcher shops will grind chicken or turkey parts with the bone for you. These need to be used raw because the bone will be brittle unless pressure cooked. You will need to add some organ meats, such as heart, kidney, liver etc at least 2-3 times a week. If you have access to lung tissue, tripe, and other odd body parts these are great sources of nutrition. However, it is very important to avoid the nervous system: brains and spinal cord. The brain and spinal cord can be a source of prions, the entity responsible for mad cow disease.

Veggies and Fruit: You should use a variety of vegetables and fruits for additional vitamins and fiber. Vegetables should be shredded in a food processor or blender because dogs cannot digest the cell walls of raw veggies easily since they lack the enzyme cellulase. Alternatively you can lightly steam the veggies and pulverize them. Another option is to stew the meat and veggies together until everything is falling apart. If the bones are included in the stew you will need to pressure cook them until they are soft and pliable. You can use what vegetables and fruits are in season. I like to have things like yams, pumpkin, carrots, squash, green beans, and broccoli make up the bulk of the vegetable matter. Next are beans, peas, and the dark leafy greens like spinach, kale, collards, and romaine or other dark type lettuces. You can also use fresh leafy herbs like basil, coriander, and parsley. Then in much smaller amounts you can use fruits like apple, peaches, banana, and then berries in the smallest amounts. You can use pretty much the same things you are eating with a few exceptions. I would limit white potato, tomatoes and peppers. Small amounts of these are OK. I would not use anything in the onion family. Onions can cause anemia, which can be fatal. No onions, leeks, shallots, or chives. I would avoid avocado, grapes and raisins since these have been reported in some instances to cause problems.

Grain: You will find differing opinions from different people regarding the inclusion of grain. My opinion on grain is that it is largely unnecessary. You might choose to add some grain if you have an extremely high energy performance dog or an animal that continues to lose weight with the more carbohydrate limited diets. If you do use a grain I would choose whole unprocessed grains that can be purchased in bulk at health food stores. Grains like barley, brown rice, oats, and amaranth are ok to use. Grains should not be fed raw they must be cooked. Grains are digested more slowly than meats. You may need to feed grains and veggies as a separate meal from meat in some dogs. Avoid highly processed grains like instant white rice, wheat, and corn products, they are less digestible and have poor nutrition. I do think that the ideal diet for a particular breed does reflect the naturally available food sources with regard to where they originated. Perhaps some breeds are meant to have some grain. I tend to avoid blanket one size fits all recipes for that same reason.

Fish: Lastly, we must pay attention to finding a source for essential fatty acids. EFAs are very important for healthy skin, and brain function. The most common source is fish or fish oil. You can also get EFAs from flax seed, flax oil, coconut oil, nori (seaweed), and spirulina as well. I suggest using small amounts daily and rotating the source periodically.

Of course, the more you know about diet the more likely you will get it right. Every health issue will dictate specific dietary ideals. Please discuss health issues with your Veterinarian. Ten years ago you would have had trouble finding a book. New books are hitting the shelves faster than I can read them for review now. So, here is a reading list that includes some of the old classics and a few newbies, and online references to get you started.

Give Your Dog a Bone by Dr. Ian Billinghurst

Raw Meaty Bones by Dr. Tom Lonsdale

Raw Fed Dogs By Corina Beth McDonald

Natural Health Care for Dogs and Cats by Dr. Richard Pitcairn

The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat by Juliet DeBairacli-Levi

K9 Kitchen: The Truth Behind the Hype by Monica Segal

Home-prepared Dog and Cat diets by Donald Strombeck

www.drianbillinghurst.com/index.html

www.rawmeatybones.com/

www.drasko.com/nutrition.htm#dog_diets

http://neuro.vetmed.ufl.edu/Alt_med/Library/Advisor/vitamin.html

<http://www.monica-segal.com/>

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