



CDTS
Cranbourne Dog
Training School

"Positively the best- for you and your dog"

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What To Feed?

The Dog Owner's Dilemma

You are what you eat, and this is also true of your dog. Your dog's behaviour, happiness, health, longevity and over all well being are all dependant on you feeding him a well-balanced nutritional diet.

Many commercial dog foods although convenient, are highly processed and may be extremely nutritionally deficient, in just the same way as processed food is for us too. Forget about what the advert says about how good a food is for your dog. You have to look at what's in it. Forget about price. This works both ways. Just because it costs more doesn't necessarily mean it's better than a less expensive variety.

Following is a quick check list to determine if your dog's food possibly not right for him:

- he doesn't want to eat the food
- he has large, voluminous smelly stools
- he has wind
- his teeth get dirty and brown
- his breath smells
- he burps a lot
- he constantly sheds
- he has a dull coat
- he smells like a dog
- he is prone to ear and skin infections
- he has no energy or is hyperactive
- he easily picks up fleas
- he easily picks up worms and has to be wormed frequently
- his immune system is impaired
- he eats random things such as stones, metal, plastic etc (although there may also be psychological reasons behind this behaviour too)

All of these can happen occasionally with any dog. When one or more of them occur frequently, or continuously, it's time to find out why.

Your dog is a carnivore and not a vegetarian. He needs meat. His teeth are quite different from ours - they are made for ripping and tearing meat. They do not have flat surfaces for grinding up grains. His digestion starts in his stomach and not in his mouth. All the enzymes in his system are geared to breaking down meat and raw foods.

When choosing a food for your dog, take time to read the label thoroughly. Look for a food that has animal protein in the first three ingredients. Preferably it should say the word chicken, lamb or beef rather than 'chicken meal' or 'derivatives of chicken origin'.

The term meat meal or derivatives of animal origin means that the protein can be from any animal, so you are often not sure about the exact protein that you are feeding. The derivatives may also be from the less desirable parts of the animal such as the head, feathers and feet, which is not a problem if fed in conjunction with some quality muscle meat, but when exclusively fed does not give adequate good quality protein. Feathers are listed as being high in animal protein but is not a protein that dogs assimilate well.

Your dog can tolerate carbohydrates or grains, and some vegetables for energy, proper digestion, stool formation. Dogs do not need many carbohydrates to be healthy, so a diet low in carbohydrates and high in protein is an ideal diet. Diets high in carbohydrates take a long time to digest, produce voluminous smelly stools and gas. They also build up tartar on your dog's teeth, making his gums sore and his breath smell. Avoid maize, soya and wheat, none of which are particularly good for your dog. Use rice in moderation. Ordinary potato and sweet potato are better alternative that are found in commercial dog foods.

Check the label for foods that contain no artificial additives, preservatives, colours or sugars. Look out for foods that say they are coloured with caramel. Caramel= Sugar! Your dog does not see colours as we do so doesn't need green coloured biscuits to make him think he's eating his veg. Colours are added specifically to make it pleasing on the eye of the owner. Even if your food says 'contains no added colours or preservatives', try to avoid as this suggests the colours and additives were put in before the manufacturer turned it into dog food.

The argument over wet or dry food is a complex one. Vets will claim that dry foods are better as they clean your dogs' teeth. This will only happen to a small degree if the dog actually chews it. Often it is swallowed whole and therefore that benefit is lost. Wendy Volhard (see below) believes that tartar build up on dog's teeth is due to an alkaline diet (too much cereal) as opposed to a more acidic diet (more meat based). If you need to clean your dogs' teeth, brush them or something to chew on, there are tripe sticks, dried beef jerky, 'greenies' (veg based chews) and fish skins. All are hard and will clean teeth to a certain

degree. We do not advocate rawhide chews due to the preservatives used and the danger of them getting stuck in your dog's gullet when they get small enough for the dog to get the whole chew in his mouth. Avoid any chews that contain sugars, colours, or are in any way artificial. There are so many more natural products – and it's interesting that there are big commercial companies that sell products that they say clean teeth – which seems a bit of a contradiction as the pet food manufacturer also claim that dried food cleans dog's teeth, there realistically there wouldn't be a need for that company to make teeth cleaning chews!

Dry food is the most highly processed of all dog foods and takes a long time for the dog to digest. Dry foods can take at least 10 hours to break down and clear the stomach which is a consideration for deep chested dogs as that would suggest there's very little time that your dog would ever have an empty stomach. On the Vet Info website they quote 'it typically takes between 4 & 6 hours for a dog to process a meal's worth of canned food. On the other hand, it may take as many as 8 to 10 hours for the same dog to process dry food completely'. Also, it means that the first meal may still present when you feed the second one. The main reason for this is that the dog does not have the enzymes for breaking down cereals naturally in its stomach and has to manufacture and deliver them from other organs and areas in the body. By comparison raw meat is broken down in about 4 hours and actually starts to leave the stomach in about 20 minutes.

Wet foods sometimes contain sugar but do tend to contain less preservatives as they are vacuum packed. The problem is that moist food can contain up to 80% water so the manufacturers tend to suggest feeding large quantities to make up for the amount of moisture. If you do not feed the large quantities that are suggested for your dog's size, then you are at risk of them not getting enough nutrition from the food. There is also the argument that wet food sticks to the teeth and gums more which can cause plaque build-up.

Some dried foods have a high fat content, and again, as a responsible pet owner, if your dog is gaining weight so you decide to feed less as the recommended daily amount, you are in danger of nutritionally compromising your dog as your dog is not getting the manufacturer's suggested amount of food. Fat in dried dog food needs to be preserved and under EU legislation, both natural and artificial additives come under the same umbrella. Look for Alpha tocopherol (another name for Vitamin E), which is a natural preservative but won't give your dried dog food as long a shelf life. Also, lots of dried foods are sprayed with digest (we'll leave you to go onto the Defra site to find that one out!) in order to encourage the dog to eat it – unsurprisingly, many dogs don't like dried kibble.

It is also worth mentioning that most vets do not get a lot of education on dog nutrition and the likelihood is, is that the pet food manufacturers come in to give them that education. Some vets have told me they've had a whole week on diet for dogs, others have told me they've had one afternoon! For the individual pet food manufacturers, pet food makes them a lot of money - there are currently in excess of 8 million dogs owned in the UK so pet food is a big business. Marketing is key - trying to get the pet owner to buy into their products by making the bags look good, selling food for specific breeds (does a Westie really need a different food to a Labrador or a dachshund?!), adverts that tell you how good the product is - the only way to decide is to read the label!

Raw food is what we feel to be the optimum choice but only commercially prepared food - definitely not home-made diets! These foods are made of good human grade meat, ground up bone plus veg such as butternut squash, kale etc. Some (but not all) also contain all the minerals your dog needs for good health (this is where you learn to label read, feeding just raw meat is not enough as it won't be balanced). It comes frozen so the downside is that you need freezer space and it may not be as easy to travel with (but not impossible). However, pound for pound, it's far cheaper than commercial dried foods, it produces small very un-smelly stools and teeth do seem to stay much cleaner (as a raw food feeder to every one of my dogs over 25 years, I have yet to use toothbrushes etc and never had a dental problem in a variety of breeds). Coats are healthier looking, conditions such as regular upset tummies, skin and ear infections are generally just not seen and the dogs tend to be much calmer with less behavioural issues. Sometimes because it's so economical to feed (you need very little), some dogs can get hungry on raw but I tend to add left-over cooked veg to help fill my dog up (I rarely add cereals and would rather use the odd boiled potato, ordinary or sweet)

Vets are quite often 'anti raw' because they believe you have an increased risk of you and/or your dog getting salmonella or campylobacter. Realistically, this is unlikely, partly because just like any other pet food manufacturer, raw dog food manufacturers have to send regular samples off to Defra to be tested and as long as basic food handling protocols are followed, the chances are as slim as you catching it from handling meat used for your family! Do remember, your vet would like you buy your dog food from the veterinary practise as there are financial incentives given to vets to sell the products so it's in his best interest to suggest you the food he sells in the surgery!

At the end of the day, it's your choice to feed dried, wet or raw and there are pros and cons to all of them. Raw is not for everyone and there's now some really good, small UK companies offering some fantastic alternatives to the 'big guys' like Heinz, Mars, Nestle, Colgate Palmolive etc. It's your choice but if you're undecided, there's a really good website that gives all commercial foods a rating according to the quality (well worth a look) and it's worth looking at the

rating of what you're currently feeding, plus they highlight what's in there that lowers that rating – www.allaboutdogfood.co.uk

Below are some brands of food which we suggest you take a look at. They are those which we feel are some of the best in their relevant 'types' ie we have listed some raw, dry and, some wet foods suppliers.

If you are interested in a raw diet we recommend a balance complete food - there are several companies who offer prepacked frozen raw food for dogs

- Nutriment <http://www.nutriment.co.uk/> They are also very happy if you go to visit them in Camberley to offer advice and give out lots of 'freebies'!
- Natural Instinct www.naturalinstinct.com
- Honey's Real Dog Food <http://honeysrealdogfood.com/vets.php>
- Wolf Tucker <http://www.wolftucker.co.uk/>
- Benyfit <https://benyfitnatural.co.uk/>
- Paleo Ridge <https://www.paleoridgeraw.uk/>

There are quite a few dried dog foods around now, and the smaller companies do a better job than some of the larger ones. Smaller companies tend to use better quality ingredients. Most of these dried food companies make a wet food as well as dried. (In no particular order)

- Akela <http://www.wholeprey.com/akela-80-20-dog-food.html>
- Aatu <http://www.aatu.co.uk/>
- Acana <https://www.acanapetfoods.co.uk/>
- Eden <https://edenpetfoods.com/>
- Bob and lush <https://www.bobandlush.com/>
- McAdams <https://mcamspetfoods.com/>
- Edgard Cooper www.edgardcooper.com
- Wolfworthy <https://wolfworthy.co.uk/>
- Carnilove <http://www.carnilove.co.uk/>
- Oodles - <https://www.oodleskitchen.co.uk/>
- Tribal - <https://www.tribalpetfoods.co.uk/>
- Naturevetal - <https://www.naturavetal.co.uk/>

Please note it is very unadvisable to mix dried and raw food together as your dog will struggle to cope with the 2 very different ways in which the foods are digested.

If you wish to feed Wet food

- Joe and Jack's - <http://www.joeandjacks.co.uk/>
- Edgard Cooper
- Naturediet - <http://www.naturediet.co.uk/>
- Bob and Lush (see above)
- Applaws
- Nature's menu
[http://naturesmenu.co.uk/products/Pouches for Dogs/Dog Food Pouches/](http://naturesmenu.co.uk/products/Pouches%20for%20Dogs/Dog%20Food%20Pouches/)
- Lilly's kitchen dog food - www.lilyskitchen.co.uk/
- Akela and Canagan also do a wet food variety

Local Raw Food Stockists:

Raw4pets in Ascot/Bracknell www.raw4pets.uk

Centre Stage Grooming <http://centrestagedoggrooming.co.uk/home.html> in Cheapside (just outside Ascot)

Stevie Boos pet services <https://www.stevieboo.co.uk/> in Bracknell

Carniraw <https://www.carniraw.co.uk/> also in Bracknell.

Natural Instinct is also readily available in pet shops in garden centres such as Longacres, plus places like Ryslip Kennels in Binfield, or, go to Camberley to buy either Nutriment or Natural Instinct direct from the manufacturer as quite often they'll give you free samples to try. I personally use Nutriment as I believe it has a few extra goodies like virgin organic coconut oil, sesame seeds etc in it. Nutriment has a list of local stockists on their website too.

Some internet sites with more information on keeping your dog healthy.

- Canine Health Concern - <http://www.canine-health-concern.org.uk/>
- Wendy Volhard's Site - www.volhard.com
- Raw Meaty Bones- <http://www.ukrmb.co.uk/>
- Dog Food Analysis - <http://www.dogfoodanalysis.com/>
- Nick Thompson holistic vet - <http://www.holisticvet.co.uk>

Books that make for good (but sometimes scary) reading:

- The Holistic Guide to a Healthy Dog – Wendy Volhard
- Foods Pets Die For – Ann Martin
- Pet Allergies – Alfred J Plechner and Martin Zucker
- Raw Meaty Bones – Tom Lonsdale

If you do decide to change foods, remember to change gradually over about 4 days – unless you're changing from dried to raw, in which case speak to the manufacturer for guidance.

At the end of the day, remember your dog is completely reliant on what you decide to feed him – he has no choice over this, and the better the quality of his food, the less vet visits you're likely to have and he'll should be healthier and live longer!