

Keeping Your Dog Healthy

Query a dozen dog breeders as to what they feed their dogs and you'll more than likely get a dozen different answers. You'll find the subject of dog feeding very similar to politics; it will start an argument most any time. How and what you feed your dog are for you to decide. A working knowledge of the dog's nutritive requirements and how to provide them is essential to intelligent dog care. Your dog's health and longevity will depend a great deal on your ability to feed him properly. There's an old saying: "The eye of the feeder fattens the cattle." Of course, you are not especially interested in fattening your dog. But you can apply to your dog-feeding program the basic principle of this old saw: Feed your animal well and observe the daily results.

THE VARIOUS DOG FOODS Your dog will maintain normal growth when fed a commercial dog food or a combination of commercial dog food and meat or wholesome leftovers. However, if you read the pamphlets put out by the dog food companies, you will be told that there is nothing like prepared dog foods for your dog.

Prepared dog foods There are three types of prepared dog foods sold today: Canned dog foods are a mixture of meat or meat by-products (or both) and cereals (corn, oats, soybeans, wheat, barley, etc.), vitamins, minerals and fat. They are generally high in moisture, about 72% (moisture is in the meat products and is also added), and low in solids, about 28%. Dog biscuits are a mixture of unbleached wheat flour and other cereals, dehydrated meat by-products, vitamins, minerals, fats, and water or skim milk. Dog biscuits are baked. They are low in moisture (about 10%) and high in solids (90%). The fat content is low. Dog meal is available in three forms: "old-fashioned meal," containing cereals and meat by-products (usually tankage or blood meal); homogenized meal, containing cereals, meat products, vitamins, minerals and fat (these are blended, cooked and dehydrated); and the newer meal-and-gravy foods which are homogenized meals with a dehydrated gravy added for palatability.

Meats, vegetables and wholesome leftovers While your dog is basically a carnivorous animal, feeding him solely on meat is neither economical nor nutritionally sound. Meat is expensive today and a balanced diet consisting of meat alone is not feasible. Then how do the wild dogs manage to get a balanced diet? Simply by eating various parts of their victims. When the wild coyote or wolf kills a rabbit or bird, he eats the muscle meat for proteins; the heart, lungs and other organs for vitamins; the contents of the stomach and intestines for carbohydrates (present as vegetable matter eaten by the bird or animal) and bones for minerals. Despite his selective eating, however, the wild dog is not as well fed as the domestic dog. The wild dog eats only when he is able to bring down game; his existence is one of either a feast or a famine. Beef, lamb and pork livers, kidneys, hearts and muscle meat are all excellent sources of proteins and vitamins. The glandular organs of cattle, sheep and swine, such as brains, tripe, spleen, are also nutritious. Pork should be cooked because of the danger of trichinosis, an infestation of worms in the muscles and intestines. Fish and chicken are also good meats. Fish should be boned and cooked, especially trout and salmon. Vegetables, especially the green and yellow varieties, may be fed for bulk and vitamin value. Vegetables are more easily digested by the dog when cooked. Avoid feeding cabbage, lima beans, peas or other legumes. Stewed, dry or raw fruits (peaches, apples, pears, prunes or apricots) may be added to the ration or fed alone. Not all dogs will eat fruit. Citrus fruits are not necessary, and are rarely relished by the dog. Soon you will learn how to feed your dog well, and he will remain healthy and happy.

About the Author

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