



More Years Together With Proper Nutrition

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Chapter 1 – Why Worry About Your Dog’s Diet

Your dog is your buddy. In some cases the best friend. They offer you unconditional love and company. Some breeds live to please you. They can brighten up your day when you get home after a long day of the office with how excited they are to see you. It is a known fact that having a dog can improve your mental health and offer companionship for many people. Dogs can be trained to do a number of things, they can be trained to be a Seeing Eye dog, police dog, and even clown dogs. They can do tricks such as dance with your, sit, play dead.

I love my dog. He is a 2 year old dopey golden retriever who is my protector and my buddy. I love the greetings I get from him when I walk in the door. I love the fact that when he wags his tail, his whole body shakes back and forth. I spoil my dog and to be honest I never gave much thought to what I was feeding him, or even how important it was. My whole life I have had dogs. You would think that I know all about their diet and how important it is for them to have a good diet.

Well I don’t, or at least I didn’t up until a short while ago. I was one of those dog owners who didn’t give my dogs diet a second thought. I bought whatever dog food was on sale that week and never read the ingredients. I listened to my vet advertise brands of dog food and sometimes took his advice but other times didn’t because I knew he was being paid to promote the food. I could tell because of all the free samples he was trying to get rid of.

I wasn’t however, one of those people who fed their dogs leftovers from the dinner table. Those are the people who fall for the puppy dog eyes that our dogs seem to have mastered. That is not to say I didn’t toss him a taste every now and then, but for the most part, I never fed him. Some of the food we eat can be toxic for a dog, and greasy foods, or fried food, forget it. Have fun cleaning up after him after that mess!

It wasn’t until I noticed my dog’s coat not looking as shiny as it once did. Other dog owners have said it wasn’t until their dogs began scratching themselves silly or not have much energy that they notice something was the matter. One person said it wasn’t until their dog’s stomach grew so much from him being overweight did they realize their might have been a problem with the food.

Dogs are mammals, just like us. If we eat too much and don’t exercise enough we are going to get fat as our dogs. If we eat food that is not good for us, we tend to feel lethargic afterwards and do not want to move. Eating unhealthy for us can cause a whole slew of problems from heart disease to diabetes. We can make our skin look unhealthy and our hair and when we go to bathroom. Well let us just say that it can be pretty ugly sight.

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Dogs are no different. If they eat too much and get no exercise they become overweight. If they eat food that is not good for them, they too can feel lethargic and have no energy. What they eat can affect their coat and their skin. Dogs can get most of the same diseases we do. They can get cancer, they can get heart disease, and have heart attacks. They can even get diabetes.

This is why it is so important to understand why your dog's diet is so important to their lives. Just like with us, dogs are what they eat, just like we are. Unfortunately though a dog can not tell you when something does not feel right on them, or when they have a stomach ache from the food they eat. Most of us watch what we eat because of the health benefits that come with the effort, and it is the same thing in our dogs.

A dog's diet needs are not that different from our own. They require the same vitamins and minerals as we do just not in the same quantity. They require protein, carbohydrates and fats just like we do. Their stomachs work similar to ours. There are only a few differences. If we eat too much and not exercise enough, we get overweight. Overweight can bring on a whole slew of problems for us. For a dog, it is no different. If they eat too much and do not get enough exercise, they too will become overweight and they too will deal with a whole slew of problems also. The food we put into our body can affect our skin and our hair. The food we put on a dog's body affects their skin and their hair. Why do some dog owners think otherwise? We eat certain foods to give us the nutrition we need to keep us healthy. The same is true for dogs. While they can not eat the same foods we do, careful attention should be paid to the ingredients in dog food to make sure they are getting a healthy and nutritious meal.

Poor diet in dogs could mean many things. Dogs with a poor diet do not have high energy levels, they may develop health problems down the line, they can be overweight or underweight. They can have teeth problems, bad breath, infections. The list goes on and on. An unbalanced diet for your dog could mean a shorter lifespan than your dog has.

Just as important as a good diet is, it is just as important to keep your dog on a feeding schedule. Free feeding your dog is almost like an invitation to obesity for some dogs. They can just graze all day. Getting your dog on a set schedule will help his diet in the long run and also his potty and business breaks outside.

Most dog owners consider their dog part of their family. Keeping a dog on a good diet has tons of benefits. You could be preventing a number of diseases, stomach issues and even be preventing cancer in some dogs. Just like us dogs can get cancer, they can get diabetes and they can even suffer from high blood pressure. What does your doctor tell you to do if this were to happen to you? Your doctor would tell you to change your diet.

You could keep allergies at bay if you make the smart choices for dog food. You could help prevent arthritis in your dog as they age. There are so many more reasons why you should make sure your dog is getting the best food available. With the proper diet, you could be looking at added years together.

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Chapter 2 – When Should Good Nutrition Start

So when should a dogs good nutrition start? Right from the moment they are born. In fact pups get an excellent source of nutrition and antibodies right from their mothers. In the first 24 hours after they give birth, a female dog will produce a liquid called Colostrum. This is the same liquid that women produce right after they give birth but before their milk comes in. In this colostrum are antibodies that the mother has been exposed to by the vaccinations she has received. So if you have a mother who is up to date with her vaccinations, her pup will be protected at least until they are old enough to begin their vaccine schedule. Usually the antibodies will stay in a pup's blood until they are a few weeks old.

Without colostrum a pup's chance of survival can be drastically reduced. Colostrum is a source of protection and nutrition and is also playing a part in maintaining the fluid level in your pup. In order for a new pup's heart to work, it needs a high volume of fluid. Colostrum helps balance this all out.

After the first 24 hours and mother will start producing milk for their pups. Most experts agree that a pup should just nurse for about 3 to 4 weeks until their puppy teeth start showing. Once their teeth start coming through, the breeder should start adding in solid food because nursing might start to become too hard for the mother with their puppy teeth. If you have a pup or have experience with puppies, you know how sharp those teeth are. Imagine the pain their poor mother must experience if she accidentally gets nipped while they are nursing.

Most vets and breeders recommend that puppies are kept with their mother and their litter until they are at least 7-8 weeks old. By this time they are old enough to be weaned from their mother and ready to begin their new life with you. There are some questions to ask your breeder (if that is who you are buying your dog from). Double check and make sure the pup nursed for the first 24 hours. This way you can rest be assured that they got colostrum. Also ask your breeder or wherever you are buying your dog from what kind diet the pup has been on. Find out what kind of kibble the pup has been getting. Most of the time, a breeder will send you home with a bag of kibble and leave it up to you to determine if you want to stay with that kibble or use a new one. Switching is your choice. Some people switch because the kibble the puppies were on at the breeders have had bad reviews, others switch to a cheaper brand. All I ask is that if you do switch, you make sure they are still getting the nutrients they need to grow into the loving adult dog they are destined to be.

If you decide you want to try your pup on different food for whatever the reason, what kind of food should you buy for your puppy? Avoid canned food as they are made up of mainly water, salt and sugar. Your pup does not need any salt or sugar so avoid the canned and the semi-moist food. Plus soften food can also cause teeth problems down the line for your dog. Stick with a dried food. To be more specific stick with a dried

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kibble food that has a meat protein source as one of its first two ingredients. Included in this kibble should be at least 28% of protein for your puppy to help they grow big and strong. Not only that but the kibble will help the puppy's teeth. Puppies' teeth are notorious for being sharper than adult teeth. Puppy kibble is designed for these teeth. You will notice that puppy kibble is a little smaller and sometimes harder than adult kibble. This is for your puppies' teeth and to help his adult teeth come through.

If you are switching, the next step is to make the switch. Do not switch suddenly meaning do not give your pup the food it is used to one day and then a completely different food the next day. This will wreak havoc on your puppy's stomach. Not only that your pup might not take to the new food so kindly. Your best bet is to mix the food in slowly to get them use to the new food. It can take up to a week to completely transition the pup from one food to the next but in the end it is worth it for your dog. How often should you feed your puppy? Well any puppy under the age of six months should be fed at least three times a day. By the time they are six months, they should eat twice a day, and once they hit a year, they should eat only once a day. Of course that is all depending on the breed and the amount of activity your dog gets. A dog that gets a lot of activity and is a larger breed dog might benefit from being fed twice a day instead of once. It is not a good idea though to leave your puppies or your dog's food out all day for them to eat whenever they may feel like it. This can lead to unwanted behavior down the line and obesity in some dogs. Since you are feeding three times a day, which means once in the morning, afternoon and night. This does mean that if you work full time, either yourself or someone you know and trust will have to come to feed your puppy its lunch and make sure they are taking out immediately. A puppy's intestinal tract is still developing and they can not hold off on doing their business as long as adult dogs can. Make sure though you stick to a feeding schedule with your puppy.

As always limited the amounts of table scraps you give your pup in fact try not to give him any. Instead go for the puppy designed treats if you must give him something. By practicing good nutrition and diet right from the start you are creating an excellent blue print for your dog to follow through his life.

Chapter 3 – What Are The Three Choices Of Dog Food and How Are They Made?

Once your pup reaches about a year you should start to switch from the puppy chow into the adult food. What kind of adult food should you chose? There are three types of dog food, dry, semi-moist or canned.

Dry foods are usually the more popular choice and they go through a lengthy process to make. Most companies start out with raw materials such as grain, meat and fat. Then they grind them down to help increase the availability of the nutrients and mix the

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ingredients. Next is a process that is called extrusion which uses an extruder. An extruder is a machine that looks like screw inside a barrel. The food cooks as it goes through the barrel and changes the screw's turning speed. This is how the dog food is cooked and the end results are spongy dough. It is then send through what is known as a die where it is cut with a knife. The new kibbles now go into a dryer where the moisture is removed. The last step is called enrobing and it is the addition of either liquids or powders to the outer of the kibble. This is where the fat and flavor enhancements are added.

Semi-moist foods are made almost just like dry foods but when they are going through the extruder the temperature is lower and dryer and then it would be for dry dog food. Semi moist foods are obviously higher in moisture and have an increased risk of spoilage from mold and bacteria. To help prevent this manufactures formulated the semi-moist foods with mold and bacterial inhibitors and place them in special moisture proof bags.

Canned foods have been around since the 1800s. Canned food (or soft dog food) is food sealed in a can and then heat sterilized. Raw ingredients are used as they are in Dry food and semi-moist food. These are then added into a mixer and are cooked. After it is cooked but still hot, it moves into the filler/seamer. This is when it is placed in the cans and vacuumed sealed and then sterilized.

Now that who know how each food is made, how do you decide which one is best for your dog if you are feeding them store bought food.

You might want to stay away from semi-moist food. Just as you did for puppy hood. They are quiet high is salt and sugar. Sugar can contribute to gingivitis which can lead to tooth loss. Salt of course can lead to dehydration in some dogs. If you really want semi moist food for your dog, you can do ahead and add some water to his kibble already. Be careful though you do not add to much. Kibble tends to swell when it is wet and it could cause bloating in your dog. Try to stick with dry or canned. To come to an even better conclusion, you should look at your dog to decide if you should go with the dry or canned. Is your dog a large breed dog? Large breed dogs tend to eat more than the smaller breeds and you might benefit more from dry food which is sold in bulk.

Canned foods are better for the smaller breads of dog, but be careful with this because sometimes with canned food you can see a faster build up of tarter and plague on your dog. As you will find out, in the end it is going to be your dog that makes the final decision for what type of food you feed it. We tried all sorts of dog foods for our dog before finally deciding on one and it was a lot of trial and error with him.

Chapter 4 –What Makes A Healthy Dog Food and Where Can You Find It?

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A healthy dog food does not equal a cheap dog food, no matter what the manufactures promise you. One of the best things you could do for your dog's food before you buy it is read the labels. You will learn so much about the food you are buying if you only just read the labels. The first ingredient you want to see on the label is some sort of meat like chicken, or lamb. If the label says regular own meat is can be anything.

Do not get turned off if the label has some by products included such as heads, necks or stomach contents. This is ok. Truthfully your dog would eat this stuff if it was out on the wild. If you buy a food that contains this, it does not mean your dog is going to turn into a blood thirsty hound. By law meat by products can not include hair, horn, teeth or hooves or even manure. But it can include organs, liver, head and feet (usually in the case of chickens). These are very high in natural vitamins and minerals so if a dog food contains them, they are probably fairly high in vitamins and minerals.

You want to make sure there is no soy in your dog food. Dogs tend to have a real problem with soy and most are allergic to it. You are betting off avoiding any product that has soy in it. The result could be really uncomfortable for your dog. Make sure there is calcium in your dogs diet but you do have to be very careful about how much calcium your dog has. Calcium will help your dog's teeth and bones grow strong but to much and you could wind up giving your dog bone abnormalities. If you dog has too little calcium and your dog could develop rickets or softening of the bones that bend under the pressure of your dogs weights.

Also make sure your dog's food has plenty of protein in it. For a puppy it is recommended that there is at least 28% protein in their food. For an adult dog, it is 18% and for a pregnant or nursing dog the number goes back up to 28%. It is possible for your dog to get to much protein. Usually this will not do them any harm and the extra protein will come out in their urine. However if you have a dog that has kidney problems, to much protein could be a problem for them and might possibly cause kidney failure.

Fiber is also a good ingredient to make sure your pet's dog food has. A good amount for the food to contain is about 2 ½ % and 4 ½ %. Too much fiber might upset your dogs stomach. It can cause loose stools, and some accidents. Usually in an overweight dog, your vet will recommend a diet high in fiber to help your dog feel fuller or if your dog has diabetes or hyperglycemia.

Make sure there are no chemical preservatives listed on the label. Look for words like ethoxyquin, BHA or Propyl Gallate. If you see these on the label, take heed. Ethoxyquin is usually used as a preservative in many pet foods it might be hard to avoid it. Ethoxyquin can have toxic effects. There is still much debate as to whether Ethoxyquin is dangerous or not. Though it is listed as a hazardous chemical by OSHA Hazard Communication Standards some the FDA are still saying it is harmless. Do your research to determine how you feel about Ethoxyquin as an ingredient. You can find tons of information on it, on the internet. Also note that Ethoxyquin can also show up on labels as just E.

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Another important thing to look for on a label are the words or phrase “AAFCO feeding trials confirm that XYZ is complete and balanced for adult dogs or all life stages”. This means that the AAFCO (Association of American Feed Control Officials) has actually fed this food dogs to find out if it meets the nutritional needs or not. Another phrase you might see is “XYZ has been shown to be complete and balanced using testing procedures as outlined by AAFCO” this simply means that instead of feeding the food to dogs, they tested it in a lab to find out. Chances are if you see that phrase, there were no test dogs to try the food out on just laboratory tests. Again this is a personal decision for you. If you are comfortable buying food that has not been tested on dogs, by all means by the one that was tested in laboratories.

You will also notice on some foods it might say “human grade”. Again this is a debatably phrase. Some people feel that if it says human grade on it, it is to be interpreted as being good enough for humans. While others feel that human grade means it the food that goes into the dog food came from the same places which also sell food to humans.

When looking for a good dog food, beware of gimmicks. Gimmicks can range from anything such as Specially for Large Breeds or even dental/teeth cleaning formulas.

These are all things that are found in supermarkets. With all the recalls lately there are a lot of dog owners who are cautious about buying dog food in the supermarket. So where else can you look for dog food? The first place you can look are pet stores. Some Pet stores might carry different brands than the supermarkets. Another bonus is that some of these stores train their employees on dog food and they should be able to help you with any questions you have.

You can also look online. The internet will show you a world of natural and organic pet food that can be ordered and delivered right to you. They provide detail descriptions of the foods and the ingredients. The only downside is that sometimes these foods can be costly and if you do decide to purchase one, there is a possibility your dog might not like it. After all, the final decision does come down to your dog and their tastes. You might want to purchase the smallest size of dog food available to test on your dog.

Though there are many dog lovers out there who gasp at the thought of using pre made dog food, there are still many dog lovers who swear by dry dog food. There are many, many brands of dog food out there and many manufactures. No one will be able to tell you what the best one is. You and are dog will have to work together as a team. You can do your part by carefully reading the labels on the food you are going to buy. Remember cheaper is not always better. A lot of times the cheaper brands add a lot of fillers and use cheap ingredients. The more premium dog foods tend to use better ingredients with no fillers. Your dog is going to do their part by letting you know if they like the food or not. If you are switching food for what ever reason, then you want to make sure you give your dog a transition period. Sometimes if you go from one brand of dog food, to another you could upset your dogs stomach. Spend a day or two adding it to the brand you already use and each day add more new food and less of the old food until

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your dog is completely switched over. This can take a week or so to transition but it is in the best interest of your dog.

Chapter 5 – What To Do When Your Dog Is Overweight

Just like with us, if a dog eats too much and does not get enough exercise they are going to gain weight. It is very important to take care of your dog if he develops a weight problem. Just as with us, being overweight can cause a whole mess of problems with a dog. The thing is they happen faster with a dog than they do in us. The excess weight a dog has can cause extra pressure on their joints and muscles and they might develop arthritis. The extra weight can also cause heart problems with dogs and dogs can even get diabetes. Before you rush out to buy the newest diet dog food, stop and look at your dogs feeding habits.

Before you start, double check and see if your dog is overweight. You can check this without going to your vet. The best way to check is to feel your dog's ribs with both hands. For an ideal weight dog, it is easy to feel the ribs. If you look at your dog from the side, the belly is tucked up and if you look at your dog from the top, you will see your dog with a little waist. If your dog is overweight, you are not going to be able to feel his ribs. When you look at your dog from the side, you will not see a tucked belly and when looked at from the top, there is no waist. Growing up my family dog was a beagle and was overweight and her belly hung down to the ground almost, she was that fat. You could tell just by looking at her, we didn't need to do the rib test at all.

While being overweight can be the symptom of other illness, chances are your dog is just being overfed. It is still a good idea to take him to the vet just to make sure. It turns out our beagle had a thyroid problem and needed medication. That was part of the problem, the other part was that she ate too darn much.

Like we said, you do not need to rush out and buy the newest diet food for your dog. There are some simple steps you can do first. For starters look at his feeding schedule. If you are still feeding him twice a day, you should cut that down to once a day especially if he is older than a year. The schedule of feedings for your dog should go as follows: A puppy gets fed three times a day from 8 weeks until about 6 months. From 6 months until a year, they should be fed twice a day. Once they hit a year, they only need to eat once a day.

Also, keep an eye at how much you are feeding him. Keep in mind the guidelines that are on the bag of the dog food. If it states to feed your dog a cup and a half a day for example, do not feed them 3 cups. Some people believe that if they are only being fed once a day then they should double up on the serving size to compensate. This is not true. When your dog is eating three times and even twice a day, they more than likely still on puppy food. Once they are being fed once a day, they are on adult food which theoretically will fill them up more than the puppy food did.

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Next, make sure you exercise your dog. This is easier with some breeds than it is with others! Take your dog for walks, if you have a fenced in yard, make sure you are out there with him tossing a ball around or at least playing with him. Anything to get them moving. This not only helps with exercise for maintaining weight but it also helps some dogs relieve a lot of their pent up energy.

There is also a diet called the Green Bean Diet, that some have said have helped their dogs to lose weight. This diet is fairly simple to follow. You simply cut back on your dogs food and replace it with canned green beans instead. Studies have shown that you should take out about 10% of your dogs food every 5 days or so and replace it with green beans until they are receiving about half the food they would have been normally. For example if your dog eats 3 cups of dog food a day, you want to make sure they are getting 1 ½ cups of food and 1 ½ cup of green beans. Keep your dog on this until they loose the weight they need too. Always double check though with your vet before starting any new diet for your dogs.

You should try and stay away from diet dog food. They are usually filled with fillers which are how they keep the fat and protein levels lower than in regular dog food. Plus these formulas might do more damage than good. You really are better off saving your money and either cutting down his food, or trying the green bean diets. We tried some of these diet formulas and nothing happened. The only time our beagle started losing weight was when we started feeding her less.

Lastly when you are trying to get your dogs weight under control, you should cut out all treats including table scraps and raw hides. These are a no when you are trying to get your dog to lose weight. Table scraps should be avoided no matter how much your dog weighs.

Chapter 6 –Should You Give Your Furry Friend Table Scraps?

We probably are all guilty of this, I know I am. I am sitting down to dinner with my family and I hear a thump on the floor and know its my golden settling down between our feet. After a while, I hear him scoot closer until his head is peaking out and he looks at me. His eyes wide and sad. Every time I bring my fork to my mouth, he lifts his head in hopes that the food will jump off the fork and onto the floor. When it doesn't, he lowers his head in defeat. After a while, I'll hear a subtle sigh and its my dog. He is acting as if his life is so tough. This process repeats itself until I finally give in and toss him a little something. I'm not proud to admit I do this. Lately though we have been taking to keeping our dog in a different room when we eat to avoid his pity looks.

I was doing my dog a lot of harm and I did not even know it. Dogs do not need to eat the same foods as we do all the time. We eat a variety of food and some of them are not even that good for us either. We eat fry food and food that is covered in fat. Is this food

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that a dog should have? Usually if we are eating meat, and there is fat on the meat, what part are we going to eat and give to your dog? Chances are the fat. You are not going to keep the fat for yourself and give the dog some of the meat. This is one of the reasons why too much table scraps are the leading cause of obesity in dogs. Some foods are toxic to your dog also. Almost everyone knows that chocolate is extremely toxic dogs, but did you know that grapes and raisins are also. They can cause kidney problems if eaten in large quantities. Onions and onion powder are also a no no to your pet.

Some dogs actually can wind up choking from the bones that are in some of the meats like chicken or turkey. Another reason why you should avoid table scraps. If you give your dog mainly table scraps you be setting yourself up to have a dog that will not eat anything but table scraps. By living on a diet that is solely table scraps, your dog is being denied essential nutrients it needs. Especially if your diet is not that good either.

You are also going to notice a change in your dogs waste when you give him more than needed table scraps. They may be smellier and larger than they are normally. It is not going to be pretty cleaning those up.

Let us talk about the bad manners you are also instilling on your dog by giving him table scraps. He might begin to think that anything on the table is fair game for him. Imagine leaving food on the table and turning away for one second. You turn back and the food is gone and your dog is licking his chops. Not exactly the dog of your dreams. We've had this happen before with my family dog. One day we left sausage defrost on our counter and 2 minutes later it was gone as our dog had reached up and took all them. Or how about when you are entertaining guest and your dog lays his head on the lap of one of your guests and proceeds to whine until he is given something from the table. A friend of mine's dog is so used to getting table scraps that he will actually jump on the laps of guests when they ignore him to get his scraps. Not exactly the model behavior you want your dog to show if your boss and his wife every come over for dinner.

Also, don't use your dog as a garbage can. There are some dog owners who when they clean their fridges out, tend to give some of the unspoiled food to their dogs. This could be ok, depending on what kind of food you are giving them. I know one person who once gave her dog six slices, I repeat SIX of liverwurst that were going to go bad in the next day or so and the poor dog had diarrhea for a week.

This also means you might have to stop using your dog as a vacuum cleaner. Again, I was guilty of this one also. I allowed my dog to lay under my toddlers highchair and watch him catch whatever she decided to through on the kitchen floor. I figured I couldn't be doing any hard to him. Well he was gobbling up fried chicken nuggets, and hot dogs like they were going out of style. I began to notice a big difference in his poop and it wasn't pretty. When my toddler was eating baby food she would fling her spoon all over the place and her baby food would land right on the floor. The problem was, that some baby food contains onion powder and onions can be deadly to a dog.

Let's talk about chocolate for a moment. Everyone knows that chocolate is toxic to your dog, but it does all depend on what kind of chocolate. Growing up our family beagle got

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into our pantry and managed to eat every single chocolate kiss that was in there. What was even more bizarre was that she took the wrappers off of every single one. All she got was the runs for a few days. Some people dispute about chocolate being toxic because their dog might have gotten into something with a little bit of chocolate and is ok. The thing with chocolate is that it is addictive for dogs, almost like it is with us. The difference is, it won't kill us. Chocolate contains theobromine which is a stimulant found in cocoa beans. It increases urination and affects the nervous system and the heart muscles. This is what is poisonous to dogs.

So what is a toxic dose of chocolate? It all depends. My golden Retriever could probably eat a teaspoon of milk chocolate and be fine, but someone else's toy dog might have a reaction to it. Also not all chocolates have the same amount of theobromine in it. White chocolate has the least amount of theobromine in it. It would take 125 pounds of white chocolate to cause signs of poisoning in a 20pd dog. While baking chocolate has the most, one ounce of baking chocolate is toxic to a 10pound dog. Milk chocolate is a favorite for candy bars, so keep in mind that it would take 2-3 candy bars to poison a 10 pound dog. Obviously the bigger the dog, the more it would take to produce the toxic effects. If your dog has eaten chocolate and you can not say for sure how much, if you see any of these signs, call your vet immediately: vomiting, diarrhea, increased heart rate, increased urination, excessive panting, restlessness, muscle twitching, possible seizures and it could lead to death for your dog.

Now I'm not suggesting completely stop giving table scraps out at all. If you want to every now and then, that is your right as a dog owner. There are actually table scraps out there that are very healthy for your dog. Your vegetables are an excellent table scrap to give to your dog if you really feel the need to give him something.

Chapter 7 – What Goes In Must Come Out. How Your Dog's Diet Affects His Waste

It seems that Mother Nature came up with the rule that what comes in must come out and your dog is no different. What goes in must come out and it is not always pretty. In fact sometimes it can be down right scary.

If you dog's food contains a lot of fiber, you will know. Their waste will be runny and large. Depending on certain foods your dog eats, the smell can vary from a little to a "oh my god what did you eat" smell that stays with you for a few minutes. My dog has some wicked ones, especially if he grabbed some food from my daughter. He can go about his business and five minutes later you can still smell the stench on him as he trailed it with him. Thankfully I never clean up my dogs business. I think that is a man's job.

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By watching what you feed your dog, and making sure they are on a balanced diet you can help make the process of them doing their business and you or whoever won the task of cleaning it up a lot more easier.

This is also why it is so important to keep your dog on a good feeding schedule. If they are on a feeding schedule they will also get on a good pooping schedule. Not only that but if they are eating a balanced diet, they will also get on a good schedule for doing their business. This is another reason why you want to avoid table scraps. Table scraps can make a dog have to go more often because of the problems some food can cause to your dogs stomach. The greasier the food, the worse it will be.

Of course there are going to be times when there are problems. Dogs can get diarrhea in younger dogs such as puppies who have not yet been vaccinated, you should call your vet right away. Diarrhea can mean your pet has contracted a virus such as the parvo virus which can be deadly to your pet. For older dogs, you might want to wait it out a day or so. There are many reasons for the cause of diarrhea in older dogs. If you switched your dogs food recently with out a transition this could be the cause of it. If you give your dog table scraps, stop immediately because more than likely that is what is causing the diarrhea. If your dog was outside he might have grazed on some grass and some sticks. All of these are common reasons your dog might have diarrhea.

The most common form of diarrhea is acute diarrhea. It can start suddenly and last a few days. As long as your dog is acting normal, and playing, you can treat it at home. Put your dog on a bland diet. This can be cooked meats like chicken or boil hamburger without any fat. You should give them about 1/3 of a cup. You can also give 2/3 of a cup of white rice or oatmeal. Try to keep away from oils and fats when your dog has diarrhea. If you want, you can go ahead and add some plain yogurt also. The key is to keep this up for a few days after the diarrhea has cleared up. If your dog is acting sick, dehydrated or has blood in his stool, then call your vet right away. More serious causes for diarrhea can be worms, and viruses.

I have had experience with diarrhea and my golden retriever. He got into the trash (another cause of diarrhea as you will see) and from what we gathered, ate some soiled paper towels. He woke up at 2:30 in the morning having to go out and then proceeded to wake up almost every hour on the hour having to go. We kept him on rice and chicken for the next 2 days and he was back to normal in no time.

If dogs can get diarrhea, then you better believe they can get constipated also. You can tell your dog is constipated if they are straining to go, and when they do they produce small round waste. The biggest culprit of constipation is not enough water. Your dog needs constant water, especially during those hot summer days. Make sure you always keep a bowl of fresh water out for your dog.

Another reason for constipation is waiting to much time before potty breaks. Some people feel that if they keep water from their dog during the day, they will not have to go to the bathroom as often. While technically this is true, they are also doing a job on their dog's intestines. If you have changed your dogs diet or cut back on their food intake to

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help them lost some weight, it is probably a good idea to add some vegetables into their diet. This will help.

You can also use a little bit of Metamucil. Use about half a teaspoon twice a day and make sure he has plenty of water. A final suggestion is to give your dog a little milk. We have said before that dogs are lactose intolerant, but a few ounces might help them along and soften their stools.

A dog doing their business is a normal part of life for them, just like it is with us. Also just like with us, there are going to be times when our system gets a little whacked out and needs a few days to get back to normal. Most of the time diarrhea and constipation can be dealt with at home. If you ever have a concern or feel that your dog is not acting right, call your vet right away .

Chapter 8 – What Is The Raw Dog Diet?

For as long as dog food has been around, some dog owners are getting very concerned about the dog food they are buying for their dogs after all of the recalls that have been issued this past year alone. Unfortunately the food you feed your dog today, could be the newest recall tomorrow and for some pet owners that is not a risk they are willing to take. If you look on the internet or join a dog lovers chat room you will find that a new diet is starting to become bigger and bigger and this is the raw food diet. The raw diet is not a new trend, though many pet owners think it is. This diet is basically mimicking what your dog would eat if he were out in the wild. Some people have even called it the BARF diet. BARF stands for Biologically Appropriate Raw Foods and also for Bones and Raw Food Diet.

If you are going to try this diet for your dog, remember the food is all raw and so are the bones. Never, under any circumstances give your dog cooked bones. They can splinter and cause internal damage. Also, people have stated that it might be easier for your dog if you switch the food from kibble to BARF with out any transition as long as you start simple.

So what does the diet entail? It is a meal made up of meat, and veggies. That is it. Half of your dogs meal will be the meat and the remaining ingredients make up the rest. If you can try and get your meat from a butcher to ensure freshness. Remember all the food is raw. Start off with just meat for a few days when you are switching your dog. Once your dog has settled into this you can start adding some bland veggies such as carrots. You should use a blender or food processor for your veggies. I find it easier to get my dog to eat his vegetables if I make it liquidy and mix the meat into it. By using a

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blender and pureeing it this will break down the cell walls that your dog can not digest anyway. Once those walls are broken down, your dog will get all the vital nutrients and enzymes it needs.

After you try your dog on meat and vegetables, you can then start adding richer foods like eggs or so. Once you have the hang of it start adding different veggies to make sure they get the best vitamins and nutrients.

The choice of veggies depends on you. You should though mix it up a bit. To make good choices on the types of veggies, it is good to know what each veggie contains and can do. Carrots should always be included because of the potassium, calcium and vitamins that it offers. You add green veggies one day with carrots because green has vitamins A and C in it. Watercress and mustard greens can help clean out your dogs intestine. Stay away from broccoli and cabbage as they can increase gas in your dog. I made the mistake of giving my dog broccoli one night and the effects were disastrous. It was the middle of winter and I had to sleep with my windows open the smell was so bad. Also stay away from onions and potatoes. Onions can cause problems in dogs if eaten in a large quantity and have you ever been kissed by a dog that just ate onions? Potatoes should be avoided because your dog can not digest it well.

Also included in the raw dog diet are raw meaty bones. Examples of these bones are chicken backs, necks, wings, or turkey necks. They are soft enough for a dog to chew and eat and they provide exercise for your dogs jaw and upper body muscle. These bones are excellent for your dog to eat due to the nutritional value they have. If you have a dog that tends to inhale their bones or an older dog whose teeth are not that good, you can always grind up the bones and sprinkle it on their food.

You can give some oils such as fish oil or flaxseed because they contain essential fatty acids such as omega-3. They support the heart and are important for a healthy skin and coat. They will also help with your dogs blood pressure (yes it does matter!). Some more benefits of essential fatty acids are less shedding which can be a blessing to owners of dogs who shed constantly. Essential fatty acids also help your dog with fleas. Studies have shown that dogs have these fatty acids included in their balanced diet deal with fewer fleas. These are found in fish oils and flaxseed oils. There are a few benefits though to using fish oil over flaxseed. It is true that flaxseeds contain more omega-3 than fish oils, it is inactive omega-3. In fish oils the omega-3 is in active form. Most people recommend sticking with the fish oil especially because dogs can be allergic to flaxseed oil.

So what are the benefits of having your dog on a raw food diet? Well for starters, you will notice a big change in their breath. Some people might find this hard to believe because of the fact you are giving your dog raw food, but this is not true. The raw dog diet does not contain any unnatural preservatives that can cause bad breath. You will notice a difference in their teeth also because chewing on the raw meat bones clean your dogs teeth naturally.

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You will also see an improvement in your dogs skin and coat. Skin problems will disappear and you will see a change in their coat. Their coat could become deeply colored and thick. The raw dog diet also improves the immune system due to a great balance of fatty acids and pure nutrients. This is also an excellent diet for dogs that are overweight. The raw food diet can increase your dogs metabolism.

Lastly the raw food diet tends to change a dogs stool. The first few weeks it is not uncommon for your dog to go through a detox period, where you might see their stools being a little more mucous then before. However once they get through this detox period you will notice that your dogs stools are smaller and degrade into the ground.

One thing though that tends to make people very nervous about this diet is the fact that you are giving your dog raw meat. When you think of raw meat, like raw chicken, words like salmonella poisoning and E Coli probably come to mind. Some think that following the raw dog diet is worse for your dog, then the brand name dog foods out there. Keep in mind though that the raw food you give to your dog should be perfectly safe for them as long as you handle it properly. You should make sure you defrost it properly and keep it in the fridge for the appropriate time. Clean all utensils and surfaces that you used to prepare the food. Wash your hands thoroughly also handling the meat. This will keep the bacteria down not only on your dog's food but also in your environment and will keep your family safe too. Remember also that a dog has a shorter digestive tract than we do, so the raw food moves out of their systems much more quickly. The less time it spends in the digestive tract, the less likely it will form bacteria.

Another reason why some people are afraid of using this diet is because of the old wives tale that the raw food will turn their otherwise calm and mellow dogs into the blood thirsty hounds you might see in a scary comic book. The term for this is called bleeding your dog and possibly making it want even human meat. This is not true. You will not be programming your dog to be a killer in anyway shape or form.

Now how do you choose if you want to raw feed your dog or bag him? Well for starters do you research. On the internet you will find people pro dog food and pro raw food. Read up as much as you can to gather information. Read more about the benefits of a raw diet. Read more about dog food. This might be a better choice for you due to the icky factor of having to prepare raw food for your dog. Though lately now there have been more and more companies who have been developing food that is part of the raw food diet that can be delivered to you already prepared.

You can also talk to your vet regarding this but keep in mind not all vets are familiar with the raw food diet or at least they were not taught about it in school. They were taught which brand of prepared dry dog food is best and they might not be able to give you an unbiased answer.

One thing you might want to consider doing is joining a forum for dogs lovers. Chatevo.com offers a lot of forums based on specific dog breeds, diet and nutrition. You will be able to get opinions from people who have been there and done that. Sometimes

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talking to other people who share the same love of dogs as you do, makes things a lot more clearer and you might be able to understand better than if you were to talk to an expert.

No one should bully you into picking what kind of dog food you should use for your dog. Nor should anyone scare you by saying things like dry food causes more problems or that the raw food can cause e coli. You just have to look at all the benefits to decide if you will at least try it for your dog.

The raw food diet is not for everyone nor is it for every dog. Some dogs will thrive on it, while others do not. It may not be the answer for you or your dog, but the benefits that come from it are worth a try and there really is no harm in it.

Chapter 9 – Can Your Dog’s Diet Cause Allergies?

In a one word answer...yes. Yes your dog's diet can cause allergies. The thing to keep in mind though is that dogs do not have the same allergy symptoms as we do. They do not get stuffy noses, bad coughs or water eyes. Dogs react to allergies with skin problems such as itching, chewing, and their coat taking on a poor quality. Some dogs even suffer from chronic ear infections as a result of allergies.

While allergies can be caused by many things, we are going to discuss the food allergies that some dogs seem prone to. Food allergies do not come to surface as fast as they would with us. In fact you could be feeding your dog the same dog food for years and see that just recently they started having allergy symptoms. Once the symptom comes to surface though, that is it. Food allergies usually show themselves with itchy skin, anal itching, ear inflammation, and rubbing their face on the carpet. I have never personally owned a dog with allergies but have seen dogs with allergies that spend a good twenty minutes scratching the skin off of them when their allergies act up. They were so bad, they actually had bald patches on their coat from how fast and furious they scratched.

Keep in mind that dogs are not allergic to brands of dog food, but rather the ingredients that are in your dog's food. The most common food allergies are beef, pork, chicken, milk, soy and corn along with a few others. If you buy a brand of dog food with one of these ingredients, and find your dog is allergic, and then you buy another brand with the same ingredients you are going to find your dog is still allergic. Here is yet another reason why it is so important to read the labels of your dog food!

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The first step to figuring out if it is your dog's food that is causing your dog to suffer, take away your dogs food and feed them only a diet that consists of things that your dog has never eaten before. This should be protein and starch. You can try lamb or rabbit mixed with rice. Do not give them anything else during this trial period. Do not give them any treats, bones, table scraps or even chew toys. Keep them on this diet for a few days. Once the symptoms start to improve, go back to the original food for a few days and make a note of what you were given your dog. You know now they are not allergic to it. If they symptoms return, your dog is allergic to something in the food. The next thing to do is to return to the test diet and add one new ingredient a week to rule out allergies. For example try chicken one week and if the symptoms get better, you know it is not chicken. The next week try beef and if the symptoms return then it is safe to say your dog is allergic to beef. Try this though with all ingredients because your dog could be allergic to a number of ingredients in their food.

Once you find out the culprit or culprits, you can look for food that does not contain the ingredients you know your dog is allergic too. One of the best choices with brand dog foods is food that is made with lamb and rice. Both lamb and rice are consider hypoallergenic as long as it does not consider wheat, or corn. Corn is not digestible to dogs.

If you are feeding your dog the Raw Dog Diet, you would still follow the same steps to find out what they are allergic to and then just cut out the offending ingredients from their diet. I know this sounds like a lot and time consuming. It can take a while to discover to cause of your dogs allergies. But in the end it is worth it for your dog and you will end a lot of their distress.

You can always take your dog to the vet for an allergy diagnoses. They will perform a series of physical examinations and tests to determine what your dog is allergic to. While this is a quicker way to get to the bottom of the mystery, it can also be a costly one plus studies have shown that blood tests do not always show food allergies. The food trial diet is the best way.

Another thing to keep in mind is that no matter what the cost of your dog food, your dog could still develop allergies to it. Granted there are more reports of the cheaper brand food causing more allergies because of the fillers that might be included in those brands, but your dog has just as much of a chance of being allergic to the premium dog food as it does with the cheaper brand food. Dogs also do not grow out of allergies.

If you notice your dog suddenly itching a lot, or chewing at their skin first check for fleas and if you find none, they more than likely have food allergies and you should begin the food test diet right away.

Chapter 10 –Should You Give Your Dog Vitamins?

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Yes you should, but they do not have to be the way you think. Usually you will get extra vitamins for your dog at their first puppy visit. There are many reasons why your dog should get vitamins and why they might need extra vitamins. All dogs have different nutritional requirements and not all dog food

There are many reasons to give your dog vitamins range from the fact that all dogs have different nutritional requirements to your dogs food not having enough. Even if your dog is on the raw food diet, they still might need additional nutrients depending on their breed sometimes. Older dogs especially need vitamin supplements because they are not eating as much food as they used to and could be lacking certain nutrients.

So what kind of vitamins do dogs need? Well, it helps to know what each vitamin is for. Vitamin A is for the skin. This might help prevent flaky skin and irritable skin in your dogs. Vitamin D is your dogs bone and teeth. Breeds like golden retrievers who are very susceptible to arthritis and hip problems will probably benefit greatly from taking a supplement of vitamin d. Vitamin E is an antioxidant vitamin and Vitamin K is the blood clotting vitamin. You also have vitamin b which is for healthy muscles, skin and blood and then vitamin C which is a vitamin for stress and antioxidant.

Some people will argue that a good quality pet food will contain all the vitamins and nutrients your dog needs. Others will tell you that is simply not true. The cooking process that some of the pre made dog foods go through might kill essential nutrients that are needed. While most pet foods will contain the “average” amount of recommended vitamins, they do not provide additional vitamins for protection against diseases.

Vitamins help regulated your dogs metabolism. Vitamins fall into two categories. One is water soluble (vitamin B and C) which have to be replenished every day. Vitamins A, D, E and K are what’s known as fat soluble vitamins. They are stored in fatty tissue and the liver and do not need to be replenished daily.

Also included in these supplements are minerals. Minerals keep our dogs body fluids balanced. Your dog needs minerals like calcium, magnesium, sodium (just a little) and potassium just like we do. You need to be careful though with minerals because they can affect each other if too much is taken.

When we talk about vitamins we do not just mean the pills that you can get from your vet. We are also talking about adding certain foods to their diets to make sure they are getting enough vitamins. If you are following the raw food diet, you want to make sure your dog gets a variety of vegetables to keep their vitamin intakes up.

If you are not giving your dog a vitamin or supplement, take a good long hard look at him. If you see he is losing weight, has skin lesions, or losing his fur he might have a vitamin A deficiency. Vitamin D deficiency is apparent when your dog loses some of his muscle tone. If you notice your dog might have a vitamin deficiency, talk to your vet to find out for sure. Your vet will either suggest that your dog begins to take the necessary vitamin or for you to change his food.

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Most of the time vitamins deficiencies are more common in packaged dog food that you can get from your local supermarket. This is why it is important to read the labels on the dog food you buys if that is your feeding method. You want to make sure it contains all the vitamins your dog needs. If it does not, and you do not feel comfortable going to the raw food diet, talk to your vet about giving your dog vitamin supplements to keep him healthy.

Chapter 12 – Do Pregnant Dogs Need To Be Fed A Different Diet?

Your dog is in heat and you notice the stud next door eyeing her up. They are left alone for a few hours and chances are they mated. So how can you tell if your dog is pregnant? There is no missed period, and no mood swings. There is not even a home pregnancy test that dogs can take. Not only do they not make them, but a dog will go through the same hormonal changes whether she is pregnant or not so there is no HGC produced in a dogs body. So a blood test is out also. There are though signs you can look out for. If your dog's stomach looks swollen or she looks like she had sudden weight gain and her nipple area seems swollen these are all signs that your dog could be pregnant. The most definitive way of knowing is by going to your vet. Your vet will do an ultrasound to determine if your dog is pregnant.

So what can you expect now that your dog is expecting? For starters it is a quick pregnancy. A dog is only pregnant for anywhere from 60-63 days. Sounds like a dream come true. Your dog usually will not need any extra nutrients through out most of her pregnancy. In fact you might find that your dog will lose some of her appetite and vomit a few times in the beginning of her pregnancy. It is just like our morning sickness only it lasts a week or so and it usually comes about 2 to 3 weeks into your dogs pregnancy.

During the last 3 to 4 weeks of pregnancy you might want to increase her food slowly so that by the time she delivers she will be eating only about 25-30% more than she was before hand. That really is not a lot. Make sure you add this in slowly and try not to overdue it. You do not want your dog gaining to much weight. A lot of well meaning pet owners start increasing their mommy's to be food intake right from the get go because they are under the assumption that they need the extra calories to grow their puppies. This is not true at least not for the beginning and middle of the pregnancy. It is only in the last few weeks. The reason why you are going to wait until the end of the pregnancy to increase her food intake is because that is when the puppies really begin to grow. Your dog will need more nutrients and energy to grow these pups. Some vets will recommend you switch her over to a growth/puppy food because it will provide the nutrients for her growing family. Other vets will suggest your put her on a nursing/lactation diet.

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It is up to you on how you want to feed her. You may want to feed her two small meals throughout the day. It might be hard to feed her in one feeding because her puppies may be taking up a lot of room and she might not be able to eat it all at once. You might even want to break the rule of not leaving food in your dogs bowl all day for these last few weeks. It might be beneficial to your dog if you do this, but make sure you are watching what she eats. Dogs can develop toxemia or eclampsia late in their pregnancy if they do not eat enough or have a poor diet. Again some doctors will have give your dog vitamins during pregnancy and others will not. Do not add any vitamins or minerals on your own to your dogs diet. It can be deadly to both the mom and the pups. Especially calcium which can increase the chance of eclampsia and even a milk fever after birth. Milk fever is when the mother does not have the ability to move calcium into their milk without taking it from themselves.

A pregnant dog can still exercise, in fact it is recommended to keep her on a light exercise program. This will not only keep her muscles tone but it will also help with the weight gain. Just as with humans, obesity in pregnancy can cause some serious complications.

Right before your dog is about to deliver, she will probably stop eating a day or two before delivery. This is one of your first signs that delivery is immediate. You might want to keep some food out for her though, just in case she wants to nibble here and there to keep her strength up.

Once she has given birth and all is well you are going to see a remarkable increase in her appetite. She is nursing after all and lactation brings upon more demands on her body. Expect her nutritional needs to multiple by 3 or 4 times. This does not happen at all once. Expect to see an increase the 20 to 30 days following the birth and the puppies grow and nurse more. By the time the puppies are a month old, your dog should be eating at least four times of what she did before she was pregnant. Keep an eye on her, if she seems to be getting to thin you can supplement the food more with some flavored canned food. Once 6 to 8 weeks have passed since delivery you should start weaning the pups and getting the mom back to normal.

To wean puppies you have to help the milk supply dry up. Withhold food and give her half of the water she normal drinks for one day. The next day give her only a quarter of what she was eating before she got pregnant and half her water. From then on, give her all the water she wants and slowly over the next five days increase her food until she is eating what she was before her pregnancy. By the time she is back on her pre pregnancy food, her milk supply will have dried up and the puppies will have been weaned.

So for a short while she will be feed more than normal, there is no reason to start going crazy with the feeding of your dog when she is pregnant. Keep her on the same schedule until the last month or so of her pregnancy. If you are unsure of when conception took place, your vet should be able to make an estimated guess for you and you can use that as a guide line. Even before your dog gets pregnant you should make sure she is eating a balanced meal and is not overweight.

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Chapter 13 – What To Feed Your Senior Dog

It is bound to happen and it is never fun when it does. Suddenly one day we notice that our dog does not come bounding to the door to greet us as often as he once did. Instead he is curled up sleeping in his favorite spot. Or one day we notice that he tires out faster on a walk or does not want to play his favorite game outside. You might even notice on the darker fur dogs, shades of gray coming through on their coat? Your dog is entering the final stages of his life, and that is becoming a senior.

When should you consider your dog a senior, is it when the above symptoms start happening or is there a guideline to follow? Your vet will tell you that your dog is considered a senior when they are in the last third of their life expectancy. A Golden Retriever that is expected to live until they are roughly 13 usually enters senior hood around 8 or 9 years old. Poodles usually live 15 years enters their senior hood at around 10 years old. Other changes you might see that will clue you in to your dog's age is that you might find your dog being a little bit clumsier than before. It is not uncommon for sudden blindness and hearing loss to accompany a dog on their trip through the senior years. It is not a bad idea to see your vet to make sure that this is what is going on with your dog and not something else.

Once your dog gets older, you will also notice a decrease in activity. They simply do not have the energy they once did. You might want to cut back on the amount of food you were feeding your dog to help prevent weight gain in those last years. You can if you really want purchase a specially formulated senior diet dog food. But double check with your vet. Some of those diet foods or senior foods can contain a lot of protein and if your dog is in renal failure, you do not want to give them any extra protein.

Your dog also has more of a chance of becoming constipated once it becomes a senior. Their stomach and digestive system do not work as well as it used to. So make sure you have plenty of fiber in your dog's diet. A good amount of fiber is between 3% and 5%. Also make sure they have plenty of fresh water. Water can help with the constipation. Make sure you take note of your dog when they are trying to do their business. Is it harder for them than usual? If so, talk to your vet to find the best solution to help your dog.

Keep feeding your dog supplements. It is a known fact that there a lot of breeds are prone to arthritis once they become seniors. It is one of the fears we have for our golden retriever. Golden Retrievers are known for developing arthritis and hip problems later in life. You want to make sure you keep those joints healthy so they can get around. Most vets will recommend a daily supplement containing glucosamine and chondroitin. Both of these nutrients will help your dog's arthritis. Vitamins also work because older dog's bodies tend to absorb fewer vitamins and electrolytes through their intestinal tract and lose them. Also some dogs will eat less once they are older and are depriving

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themselves of much needed vitamins. You also want to make sure you give your senior dog plenty of essential fatty acids. These can help with the effect of arthritis.

One of the most common problems owners of older dogs report is how hard it is to feed their dogs. Their dog will suddenly stop eating and a frantic call to the vet is placed. While it could be something serious, chances are it has to do with your dog's teeth and mouth. Their teeth are getting old and they may have a hard time chewing food like they used to. You could try giving them smaller kibble or moistening the food with water to soften it up a little bit.

Sometimes an older dog will no longer find their food as appealing as it once was. Try adding a little bit of cooked chicken and broth or boiled eggs to the food. Some vets will give you the ok to add very small amounts of bacon drippings, or hamburger grease to your dogs food.

When your dog has reached its senior years, it is not the time to skimp on dog food. Give him the best dog food you can afford. Some people report beginning to try the BARF diet (bones and raw food diet) because the raw food is easier for seniors to chew and the vegetables that are part of this diet are usually pureed, therefore easier for them to eat. The BARF diet is an excellent diet to follow because of all the natural nutrients that are included and some people say that the BARF diet has helped their dog gain back some of its energy. Other benefits include helping with arthritis and weight gain that seems to be so common in older dogs. Of course not all seniors will take to the raw food diet, so it really is up to you on what to do. Though again, the benefits greatly out way the chance that they might not like it, so it is worth a shot.

Some people tend to up the table scraps for their senior dogs. A part of them feels almost guilty that they know the end of their time together is approaching and wants to indulge them those last few years. While their hearts are in the right place, it is really not a good idea to do this. This could cause more problems in your dog then it might already have.

Watching your dog grow old is not always an easy thing to do, giving him the best diet possible might help make this a more comfortable time in his life.

Chapter 14- Should You Give Your Dog Treats?

Regardless of what anyone says, I think treats are a necessity for dogs. Especially for young dogs who are in the process of being trained. A treat is a reward for good behavior. A treat can be our way of doing something nice for our dog to show them that we love them. If you enroll your dog in a trainer class, most of the time the trainer will advise you to keep some small treats in your pocket to reward your dog with when he masters a good behavior.

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Some people enjoy giving treats, while others believe it is up there with table scraps and contributes the weight gain. I say as long as it is done in moderation and only given when called for, treats are great for your dog.

There are many kinds of treats. There are the biscuits that are great to use for dog training and other situations. Then there are rawhides, or pig ears for your dog. You can make your own treats and there are even stores out there that specialize in pet treats.

I always make sure I keep my dogs treat box full of biscuits. I usually will give him a treat after he does his business outside and on other occasions. If we have company and he is good and does not get over excited, he gets a treat. When we have, what I call our review time for things he learned at the trainer all those years ago, he gets a treat. I even keep some treats in my pocket for when we take walks and he knows to come to a full stop at a street corner. I buy your basic treats. I don't get any of those treats that say they are going to cure bad breath, or fight tarter for my dogs teeth.

Some dog owners make their own treats. Some of the loyal followers of the raw food diet will make their treats based on the diet. Some recipes are easier to make than others and if I make mine treats as I do once in a while, I try to stick to basic easy to follow recipes. A favorite of my dog has been peanut butter and yogurt. I just melt the peanut butter and mix in the yogurt and then freeze it overnight. A big benefit of homemade dog treats is that you know exactly what is going into your dogs mouth because you are the one making it for him. It sort of follows the same point of following the raw food diet. You can find books that contain dog treat recipes and there are even some on websites. A few of my favorites are:

HOMEMADE DOG TREATS

1 cup warm water
 1 ½ tablespoon canola oil
 1 ¾ cup flour
 1 ¼ cup oatmeal
 ¼ cup of all natural peanut butter

Mix oil and water together and add other ingredients. Shape into a tube a child for one hour. Slice into ¼ biscuits and cook at 300 degrees for 50 minutes on a greased cookie sheet.

FROSTY PAWS

1 32 oz container of vanilla yogurt
 1 mashed banana
 2 tablespoons honey
 2 tablespoons natural peanut butter.

Mix all ingredients together and fill a muffin tin. Freeze for a few hours and then store in an airtight container. Heat in microwave for a few seconds before serving.

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Cheesy Dog Cookies

2 cups all purpose flour
1 ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
½ cup canola oil
4-5 tablespoons of water

Combine everything but the water you can mix in a food processor until it has the same consistency of cornmeal. Then add in the water until a ball is form. Roll into ½” thickness and cut into biscuits. Bake for 10 minutes at 400 degrees on an ungreased cookie sheet.

There are countless more that you can find and even talk to your vet about. I tend to stick to the easier recipes due to the time constraint but there are more gourmet recipes out there for you dog.

There are times when I have to step up the treats and give my dog a rawhide bone. There are many conflicting opinions out there on rawhides. Some feel that they are the best treat because they help fight plaque and tarter on your dogs teeth. Some feel that they are great for puppies because they stimulate the growth of their adult teeth. Even better, your puppy will chew on the bone instead of your shoes.

On the flip side, some feel that rawhides are dangerous for your dog. For starters rawhides are not digestible by your dog and in some extreme cases can cause a blockage if a particular large piece or pieces was swallowed. There can be a choking hazard associated with rawhides. Large pieces can get wedged in a dogs throat. Some people say that the rawhides treats will scratch your dogs throat when they are digested.

I have always given my dogs rawhides treats and have never had a problem. There are instances where problems have arisen and there are many different circumstances around them. Sometimes the dogs that are what I like to call chew hounds, tend to inhale the rawhides and are at the most risk for choking. If you have a dog that is a chew hound, you might want to keep rawhides from him or at least give him the kind that are twisted or knotted. These are a little harder to chew because they are thicker. You also have to make sure you have the right size bone for your dog. A large breed dog is not going to do well with a small rawhide. That is why dogs choke, they chew on bones that are not meant for them.

How about pigs ears? Yes, they usually are real pig ears and they can smell awful but our dogs gobble them up. This is another favorite subject debate amongst many dog owners and vets. Some people refuse to give them to their dog because there have been instances in the past where pig ears that came into the USA had salmonella poisoning. Though steps have been taken to reassure that this does not happen again people are very hesitant to give their dog pig ears as treats. Some people claim that pig ears are to fattening for their dogs.

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On the other end of the fence, pig ears are all natural pork which is a big selling point for some owners. Another pro that has been said about pig ears is that they are tasty and tantalizing. I'm not sure what pet owner tested them to see if this is true or not, but I'll take their word for it. As for me, pig ears are going nowhere near my mouth. Another pro is that they will not splinter or crack which is a big problem with some rawhides out there. Some people also feel that the fat content in the pig ears is good because it promotes a healthy coat and healthy skin. Pig ears are also 100% digestible so there is no need to worry about any sort of blockage.

I will admit, I hate the smell and touching pig ears, but my golden absolutely loves them. They are special treats that I reserve for every now and then. He does not get one everyday. A lot of people say that giving a pig ear once a day is fine, but my dog gets one a few times a month and that is it.

Last year, in the winter of 06, there was a big uproar about a brand of treats called "Greenies" allegedly killed nearly 13 dogs. Greenies are a brand of dog treats that are designed to help clean teeth. They come highly recommended by vets and my vet swore by them when I complained about my dog's breath. What happened with these Greenies nearly 2 years so is that the treat became lodged in the dog's esophagus and intestine and did not break down. Greenies were always marketed as being 100% digestible, but at that point, there was doubt about how digestible these treats really were. There were also instances where the dogs were choking on the Greenies. The company that makes Greenies states that the treat is 100% safe as long as people are giving their dog the correct size. Add to the fact that they save dogs' lives by preventing periodontal disease which can lead to death in dogs. Greenies come in at least 5 to 7 different sizes for different size dogs. It was a tough time and it still is a tough decision to call if you should give your dog Greenies.

As for me personally, I gave my Golden Greenies a few times and I never noticed a difference in his teeth. Then again I'm no vet, so I do not know what to look for, but I can tell you that his breath still stunk even after the Greenies. To me, they are no big deal. My dog loved them. He devoured it in about 7 minutes flat. Even though I know if it helps with their teeth, I watch I give my dog to eat now to prevent any sort of teeth problems. Occasionally if I'm feeling really daring, I will brush his teeth.

Treats are a very important part of dogs' nutrients I think. Almost all pet owners give their dogs treats. It is our way of showing our dogs they are special and that we love them. It is a way to show them that we love them. Have you ever really watched a dog when he gets a treat or just before he gets one. Their tails are usually wagging triple time and you can see the anticipation on their faces. It is a great sight. Why deny your dog treats? As long as you are not overdoing the treats, there is no reason for your dog to gain any extra weight from them which can put your mind at rest when you are giving your dog treats.

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Chapter 14 – To Sum It All Up

As you can see there are a LOT of opinions out there on what is best for you dog. There are positive sides to using dry food and some negatives. It is your choice.

I never knew how important it was to read the labels on dry dog food and it took me a while to get comfortable reading the labels in the supermarkets. There I was reading a 50 pound bag to make sure it was filled with all the nutrients that were enough for my dog. In the end though I knew it was well worth it. I was able to find some dry dog food that I knew was good enough for my Golden.

The Raw Food Diet is a growing diet that many people are beginning to swear by. It cut down on vet visits and vets costs. It is natural and there is nothing added to the food except what you put in it.

Your dog is part of your family. I know mine is and I am very attached to my dog. I want to have many years with him and when he does become a senior I want to make sure he is as comfortable as he can be and that some of the problems his breed is prone to are not that bad for him. I know now a good diet can help this.

You owe it to your pet to make sure he or she is being fed the best food possible. You are their voice and you are the one to make the decisions. So make a decision to start taking a better interest in your dogs food.

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