

## Picky Eaters

Contrary to intuition, picky eating in dogs is more often a training problem, rather than an appetite problem. As caring pet parents, we want to make sure they get the nutrition they need. When they refuse a certain food, we typically rush to provide them with other options. Our smart pups quickly learn there are other options and repeat this behavior to get more of those alternative options such as a different flavor of dog food, extra treats, cheese, deli meat, etc. This is especially common in smaller dogs as we tend to feed them small bits of our own food throughout the day, spoiling their appetite.



## Understanding the Way Dogs Eat

Your pup has turned his nose up at his food for the second meal in a row, and you're starting to panic. You think your pup may begin to starve and perhaps it's time to call the vet. Fortunately, there is no need to worry. Sometimes the simplest explanation is the most likely and your dog may simply not be hungry.

While dogs are similar to humans in many ways, eating habits is not always one of them. Unlike us, it is not uncommon for dogs to skip meals, even for days at a time. While humans are not well adapted to periods of fasting, dogs are very resistant to starvation and are well adapted for short periods without food.

This trait is a product of their ancestry. For most wild animals, food is not reliably available twice a day. For animals to survive, they must be adapted to easily handle intermittent periods of famine - sometimes for up to two weeks. That being said, skipping a meal or two does not even pose a minor threat to your pup's health, and is often rooted in completely natural behavior.

## How to Fix Picky Eating Behavior

We have a few simple tips to help you get rid of your dog's picky eating habits. However, like all training, the most important factor is **consistency**.

- Reduce or eliminate treats. Bits of food given throughout the day give your dog the impression that food is always available and not "rare". In addition, the excess calories can simply fill your dog before meal time comes along.
- Establish a strict feeding schedule. Feed at the same time(s) each day and don't leave the food out for longer than 30 minutes. Your dog will soon learn to "eat it or lose it".
- Don't react when your dog doesn't eat his food by providing other options, and under no circumstances should you hand feed your dog to encourage eating. Soon, your pup will have you trained to offer him something new each time!
- If your dog chooses not to eat his meal, cover it up, place back in the refrigerator and serve again during the next feeding.
- Limit variety to one or two diets. Picky eating behaviour is often exacerbated by constant variety.
- Double check serving portions and consider cutting back. Some dogs' caloric requirements are less than suggested, due to varying activity levels.
- Exercise your dog before meal time. This helps stimulate their appetite.
- **Whatever you do - be consistent!**