

Homemade Dog Food

Keeping it simple is the key to feeding your dog.

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Q. I have a 5-year-old Yorkshire Terrier. He's on the large size (approximately 11 pounds). I have never found a dog food I feel is best for him and his overall long-term health.

There are so many products on the market with so many claims. My vet also carries specific brands/products he believes are superior and pushes these, as well. I've read many magazine articles endorsing specific brands and condemning others.

I'm now reading several books on the value of home-prepared diets for dogs. My vet has no use for this concept. He does not think that you can meet your dog's nutritional requirements. Do you agree?

What are your thoughts and philosophy on dog food? What brand do you feed your dog? What do you recommend?

A. You bring up a great question in regard to dog food, and I will try to use the same strategy in answering it that I use when trying to diagnose a tough case: KISS, or Keep It Simple, Silly (actually, the word is stronger than silly).

Pet food is divided into two major categories: food that has been field tested by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), and food that has not been field tested. Food that is labeled as field tested has been fed to dogs for its intended purpose, i.e., puppy food, high-performance diet, senior diet, etc. These foods have been found to fulfill their labeled claims. Non-field-tested diets have never been fed to a significant group of dogs and assessed.

So-called "premium" brands of foods are more likely to have been field tested, while "generic" brands often are not. Check the label on the food to see if it has been field tested, or ask your veterinarian.