

Diet for Young Dog's Gastroenteritis

Use fast, then bland diet followed by plain foods will clear up most cases of “garbage gut.”

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. My year-old Chihuahua has gastroenteritis. What should I feed him, and what kind should he avoid? Thank you very much!

A. Gastroenteritis is a very nonspecific diagnosis that indicates inflammation of the stomach and small intestine. This can be due to many different causes, but usually is a result of dietary indiscretion, also known in veterinary circles as “garbage gut.”

The treatment consists of a fast, followed by a highly digestible bland diet. For the first 24 hours, your dog should only drink water, to allow his stomach and intestines to heal. In the case of a very small or young dog such as yours, you may want to end the fast at about 12 hours so he doesn't get low blood sugar.

Once the fast is over, start by feeding several teaspoons of active culture plain yogurt. This will help normalize the intestinal bacteria. Then offer small amounts of food such as plain cottage cheese, boiled chicken, and boiled white rice. These are usually readily accepted, and seem to create a good transition back to a regular diet.

Offer small amounts – for your dog no more than one-fourth cup at a time – every six to eight hours for several days. If everything is going well, and he doesn't vomit, you can put him on his regular food after several days.

For dog owners who do not have the time or inclination to prepare a homemade diet, prescription diets have similar benefits. Examples of these prescription diets are Hills ID, and Purina EN, available by prescription from veterinarians.