

## Feeding Bully Breeds

**Keep your bully dog in top-notch shape with these expert tips on grooming and nutrition.**

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Baby Bullies and BeyondFor the baby bully breed, it is important to maintain a slow, steady growth that permits bones, joints and ligaments to grow proportionally. Specifically, consult your veterinarian to determine when to switch your puppy to an adult food. Dr. Ballard notes, Puppy foods are formulated to provide higher levels of protein and carbohydrates and were traditionally recommended for the first year of a dogs life.

[However,] current research indicates that prolonged feeding of a high-protein growth formula is directly correlated to the development of skeletal diseases frequently seen in large-breed puppies, such as osteochondrosis [the improper development of joint cartilage]. I therefore advise my clients to switch their large breed dogs to an appropriate adult diet at the age of 6 months. When asked whether this recommendation applied to those feeding a puppy food designed for large breeds, Dr. Ballard comments that while he believes many of these formulas were excellent, he still prefers adult food at 6 months.

Switching to an adult diet early on can also help prevent obesity, a condition that puts undue stress on growing bones and joints.

Another key strategy that you should implement from the start with your bully breed puppy is scheduled mealtimes. If you were considering leaving food always available to your bully, forget it. Controlled feeding not only allows you to adjust amounts according to your dogs condition, it also helps simplify housetraining because puppies generally need to go after eating. Lynn Hays, owner of Blendon Kennels in Westerville, Ohio, a grooming and boarding facility, is president of the Central Ohio Pit Bull Terrier Club. Says Hays, Bully breeds tend to be hearty eaters and can easily become overweight if owners aren't careful.

A Diet Fit for Your BullyA look at package labeling on adult dry dog food (the most popular type) indicates that protein levels run roughly anywhere from 20 to 30 percent, with corresponding fat levels varying from 12 to 20 percent. When your dog is ready to make the change to an adult premium formula, its activity level becomes a deciding factor in which type of food to purchase. The bully that spends its day running in a huge fenced yard with a playful companion or one that is worked daily in activities, such as agility or tracking, can burn up enough energy to warrant a performance diet. These diets are geared to the canine athlete and run to the higher end of the scale for protein and fat levels.