

Homemade Dog Diets

Ingredients in homemade dog food are important to get right.

Brought to you by The Original Dog Bible

Some people enjoy cooking for their dogs and believe that a homemade diet of meat, whole grains, vegetables, and fruits is superior to a commercially prepared diet.

Processed dog food is a relatively new phenomenon, and nutrition scientists don't yet fully understand the subtle differences that may exist between the absorption of nutrients in fresh food and the absorption of nutrients cooked out of a food then sprayed back on.

Some people also believe that the extremely high heat and pressure used to produce extruded dog food may actually alter the protein structure in the meats used to make dry dog food. Again, scientists aren't yet sure whether such protein alteration has any adverse affect on the body, and because dogs fed commercial dog food remain healthy during regulated feeding trials, most people feel confident that such a diet is adequate for maintaining their dogs health.

In addition, many dog owners don't have the time, inclination, or knowledge to cook for their dogs. Others fear that if they don't feed their dog commercially prepared dog food, their dogs may end up deprived of certain key nutrients, eventually degrading their health. These fears are legitimate. Dogs fed all-meat diets will suffer serious nutritional imbalances, and dogs who eat only what people eat may also suffer deficiencies and the problems that can result from too much high-fat, high-sugar, or highly processed food. Feeding a homemade diet takes some work and adherence to a specially formulated diet, not just offering table scraps.

However, many dog owners who opt against commercial foods and are willing and able to learn about, prepare, and feed their dogs a homemade diet find it extremely rewarding, in the same way they are rewarded by cooking for their families. Seeing a dog relish a good homecooked meal feels great, especially when the dog enjoys improved health on such a diet. If you decide to prepare a homemade diet for your dog, research his nutritional needs as carefully as you would research any other aspect of his health and welfare.

A basic formula for a homemade diet is 50 percent protein such as beef, chicken, or turkey; 25 percent grain such as rice or oatmeal; and 25 percent vegetables, ground so your dog can digest them. This formula can comprise a large variety of foods. Most proponents of homemade diets also recommend using supplements of certain vitamins, minerals, and flaxseed or other oils rich in omega-3 fatty acids for healthy skin and coat. Your vet or a homemade diet reference book can help you decide what supplements to use and in what amounts.