

Basic Feeding Guidelines for Your Puppy

Follow these basic feeding guidelines to help you puppy grow big and strong.

People are what they eat, the old adage states. The same is true for puppies. Grow a pup on thoughtfully prepared food like Eukanuba and you can expect a dynamic, inquisitive, energetic animal that sports a dense, thick coat. What you'll see is an external articulation of all that's happening inside: the skeleton is developing properly, muscles are building, and neural pathways in the brain are expanding. If we designed his meals, he's also getting the antioxidants he needs for his developing immune system. This means his immune system is likely to be a whole lot stronger to combat common doggie diseases like distemper and parvovirus. We know understanding the nature of canine nutrition may sound daunting (and, we admit, sort of boring), but we'll try to break it down for you, as it is imperative information for you to understand. Here's a primer:

The Critical Puppy Years

Nourish him as a pup and you'll build an excellent foundation for life as a healthy dog. That's because his first few months are critical to the development of his body and mind. In fact, puppies experience their most rapid period of growth during the first six months of life. It is no real surprise, then, that puppies expend nearly twice the energy of an adult dog. The catch is that Mr. Blue doesn't have the stomach capacity to eat enough food to meet his energy requirements. Therefore it's important he's given meals with an enriched formula. So unless he's eating a premium brand, he may be missing important building blocks in his diet.

Eukanuba's Recipe

Our scientists have calculated the perfect blend of protein, carbohydrates and fat necessary to ensure good health. And while our formulas will cost you more, know that because the food is nutrient dense, your animal will actually consume less of it per meal. (Consider: Are you more satisfied after eating two bags of popcorn or the petite filet?)

Here's some of what we've included: Highly digestible carbohydrates, such as barley and grain sorghum (for sustained energy); Dense fiber, such as beet pulp (to maximize energy and minimize waste); Omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids (to keep skin supple and coat shiny); Antioxidants, like beta-carotene and vitamin E (to boost immune system).

One Size Does Not Fit All

While all Eukanuba foods contain the above ingredients, we know it is also important to consider your pet's size when mixing our blends. You see, not all puppies have the same nutritional needs. Small breeds develop faster and require higher levels of protein, fat, calcium and phosphorus; large-breed pups must be given a less nutrient-dense formula to make sure they don't overeat. Medium-breed pets, of course, have their own concerns. Think of it this way: You wouldn't ask a man who is six-foot-five to wear a suit cut for another who is five-foot-ten. Why then would you ask your furry friend to eat someone else's dinner?

Decoding Pet Food Labels

If you don't buy our product, please read the labels of other brands very, very carefully so you know exactly what you're putting into your puppy's system. The name of the food can tell you how much of a particular ingredient is in it. Brands that have animal protein source in the title—"beef formula"—indicate that 25 percent of the product is beef. Names that include "with" in the title—"with chunky chicken" or "flavor"—such as "turkey flavor" contain as little as 3 percent of the ingredient. Labels on the back of puppy food can also clue you in as to how much product you'll receive in the food. Those listed first, second and third are present in higher quantities than those listed fourth, fifth and sixth. (Though this is according to weights taken before cooking.) The product should also include a statement from an organization called the Association of American Feed Control Officials. The law requires the manufacturer's name and address be listed on the package, but beware of products that read "packed for or distributed by..." These foods aren't made by the store whose name may be on the front label. Quality and consistency may not be monitored closely.

Feeding Tips

Once you've purchased your puppy's food, it seems it would be simple to feed him—just open the bag and pour, right? But there are a few things you can do to turn his food into a meal. Think like a dietician and measure portion size correctly. To determine it, start with the daily amount recommended and divide by the number of times you'll feed your pooch (usually breakfast, lunch and dinner: after four months of age, feed only in the mornings and evenings.) Remove the bowl after he's had a chance to eat for 30 minutes. This avoids overfeeding which leads to unhealthy weight gain. (While puppies need to chew frequently, they shouldn't snack like humans.) Think like a canine connoisseur and serve his meals at room temperature, the way he likes them. Resist the urge to play chef and mix in cottage cheese, hamburger or eggs

into his chow. Such foods can interfere with the absorption of minerals provided in dog food. (Plain old puppy food might not look that enticing to you, but neither does chewing a shoe.) Always provide your pup with fresh water. Just one dropped kernel of kibble can contaminate his bowl quickly.

The Teething Pup

While the Brothers Grimm never penned a story about the Tooth Fairy leaving quarters in doggie beds, that's not because canine teeth don't fall out. Between three and six months of age, puppies' teeth loosen and are expelled. (Yes, sometimes in places you'd rather not find them, like your closet.) During this time, your pup's gums will be very sensitive; he may even refuse food. This is normal. Try easing him through this stage by: Mixing his regular dry food with canned food; Soaking dry food in water for 10-15 minutes to soften it; Loosening teeth by feeding crunchy food and biscuits; Sticking with his current food, as switching it could cause intestinal upset.

Moving to Adult Food

Just when you've gotten used to taking Pup potty every hour, reminding him to stay "down" and sacrificing expensive leather goods to his chewing habits, your little one will surprise you by growing up. When you turn this corner, buy him his first bag of adult dog food—then go get yourself a drink, you've earned it. The big indicator will be his size: He'll stop growing in height and weight. For small- and medium-breed puppies, this happens around one year; large-breed animals don't mature until they're upwards of two.

When you make the switch, follow the below guidelines: Consider whether or not your dog gains weight easily, if he has a high activity level or any other special needs. Many premium brands including Eukanuba offer unique formulas. To avoid an upset belly, gradually incorporate the new type of food with the current kibble over a four-day time period. Portion sizes can be determined by dividing the total daily amount by the number of times you feed him (usually twice). Periodically, check his weight by moving your hands along his sides. You should be able to feel his ribs. Furthermore, you should also be able to see his waistline if you peer down at him from above. (Don't embarrass Pup by doing this at the dog park; wait until you're in the privacy of your own home.) If you suspect your pet is overweight, simply increase his exercise routine.

Puppies, like children, are not cheap dates. We won't try to convince you otherwise. But if you feed your pet a high-quality premium food like Eukanuba right from the start, you'll be laying the groundwork for a healthy life. And that means you'll be spending a whole less on veterinarian bills.