



Why feeding good food matters. How to select a good quality dog (cat) food. And more!

- Feed nutrient dense food. You'll feed less and your dog will actually get the nutrition they need.
- Good diet will eliminate the need for many medications and vet bills. Can your dog still get sick? Yes, of course, but they will get sick less, not get as sick and recover quicker.
- Smaller poops and less stinky poops! Need I say more?
- Behavior issues **Balanced diet = Balanced dog**
I've seen MANY dogs get off anxiety meds or supplements, aggression and behavior issues disappear, nervous, or overstimulated energy disappear simply because their greatly diets improved!
- Gut health! The gut is where the majority of the immune system is. As above, I've seen MANY **allergies lessen and disappear** once a pet is eating healthy and eating variety. It can take time for their gut to heal and their immune system to recover. I've seen improvements happen right away as well as take up to a year.

A word about switching foods: Something I often hear from someone feeding a very poor quality food is

"This is the only food that doesn't give him/her diarrhea."

Diarrhea results from an unhealthy gut. Poor food choices create an unhealthy gut. The gut will take time to heal. Feed great food and add a probiotic and digestive enzyme supplement.

I have switched many dogs diets while they have stayed with us. I cannot bring myself to feed some of the things they come with. I have never had an issue with switching them to a healthy food. Occasionally loose poop for a day or two but even that is rare.

- A poor diet also leads to weight issues, bloating, joint issues, pancreatitis, infections (ear etc.) and so on.
- Meat sources should be **THREE** of the first five ingredients listed

- **Quality, Quality, Quality!** Look for the best quality ingredients possible. Look for “Local” “Organic” Grass Fed” “Pasture Raised” (Do the same with yours and your family’s food too!) If you can buy it at Fry’s or Walmart it is POOR QUALITY.
- NO by-products
- NO corn
- NO preservatives especially BHT or BHA
- NO sugars, corn syrup, glucose, molasses etc. Be careful, sugar goes by many names
- Grain free preferred but at the very least avoid wheat/gluten/soy/corn *See the grain free/heart study concerns note below. Cats don’t produce a grain digesting enzyme.
- NO colors
- make sure lists the source of meats, fats etc. i.e. chicken or beef, not just “meat” or “animal”.
- NO ingredients that aren’t FOOD. If you can’t pronounce it and don’t recognize it, don’t buy it.
- Smaller companies typically have better quality and quality control (avoid M&M Mars, P&G etc.)

***CATS** – Basically the same rules.

Keep in mind cats need even more protein (meat) than dogs.

Organ meats are very important in a cat’s diet.

Grain free is also important.

Wet foods and occasional air dried (Ziwi Peak or Wysong) are best for cats.

Sadly, I have not found one local store that carries a good quality cat food.

My favorites for cats are Ziwi Peak, Wysong, and Darwin’s Naturals

Cat treats. Be aware you will create a monster 😊 I do have freeze dried minnows on hand but I don’t treat often.

*Wysong has a food for cats with **urinary tract** issues. Variety is still important, even for pets with health conditions. You can contact Wysong for guidance & recommendations.

Variety! Vary the protein sources and even the type and brand. Variety will ensure better nutrition, healthier gut and help keep the allergies and food sensitivities (inflammation) at bay that can come from eating the same thing all the time.

I typically have 3-4 choices on hand and may feed one in the morning and another at night or a few days of one then another.

Just because your dog ingests their food doesn’t mean they process and absorb the nutrients well.

Dry Kibble vs Wet, Raw, Fresh, Air Dried or Dehydrated and Canned

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Keep in mind, the more processed a food is the less nutrition remains. Eating poop, rocks, sticks, always searching for food, eating but still not looking well nourished, all these are clear indicators that something is missing from the diet.

Dry kibble the extreme heat used in making those little hard nuggets destroys the enzymes needed to digest as well as any good fats most other nutritional value. While I do have a bag or two(2 different protein sources) of good quality dry kibble on hand usually, I feed it less than any other and always feed it along with a good digestive enzyme product.

Cats especially should eat wet food.

Contrary to popular belief, dry food does nothing to help keep teeth clean. Natural bones such as marrow bones will help keep teeth clean better than any special food or “treat”.

Supplements can aid many things. Supplements such as digestive enzymes (especially for kibble!), antioxidants, mushroom complex, and probiotics are very good.

I love Mercola Supplements from Mercola Market. They also have a great vitamin mineral supplement to use if making your own dog food (easier than you'd think!)

<https://www.mercolamarket.com/pages/pets-home>

Nutri Thrive is another great product <https://ultimatepetnutrition.com/>

Adding probiotics and digestive enzymes (as in the above supplements) are a huge help.

Raw foods still have their natural enzymes, are the least processed and are **my #1 choice**. Not all are created equal. It should look fresh, like meat you but for yourself. Not grey, not freezer burnt. I stick to Darwins & Small Batch brands.

Dehydrated Raw is not the same. It's typically the most expensive and it's quite processed.

Air dried raw is a better option but again, very expensive. With both you feed a very small amount which will most likely leave your dog looking at you and wondering where the rest is

Canned is quite processed and most use BPA lined cans ☹️

Concerned about grain free? Some vets are now warning against GF foods. The concern, as I understand it, is the pea and lentil protein. Two things. First, a newer study has now shown GF wasn't the problem they thought it was. Second and most importantly, as the guidelines above state, MEAT should be the main if not the only source of protein in your dog's food.

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Peas and lentils are cheaper sources of protein so many companies now use them as the main protein source. It's ok to have some but they should not be listed in the top ingredients.

For some dogs a food containing grain may be the best option. Or maybe adding one option that includes grain into the variety of foods you feed. Same rules apply. Meat main ingredient, no corn, soy, wheat. I like ancient grains. Good quality ingredients and made by reliable company.

Concerned about the slowly changing foods myth?

If the food is good quality, the dog is healthy, it's gut is healthy, switching foods should NOT be an issue. Do you eat the same thing every day, every meal? If you eat eggs for breakfast one day and pancakes the next do you end up at the doctor with a stool sample?

Where to buy?

Local feed stores often have a few good options and the staff is usually quite knowledgeable about the quality of the foods and integrity of the makers.

I prefer to buy online. Discounts are good, the food is fresher and it's convenient. Darwin's Naturals, and Open Farm ship to my door every 8 to 12 weeks. Easy!

*If you can buy it at your local grocery store (Frys, Safeway etc), Walmart or Target, it's **NOT** a good quality pet food.*

Many brands that started out producing great products have been bought out by large companies and quality greatly suffered. Do your homework. Check out The Truth About Pet Food link below.

Be aware: The ingredient list may look good but the quality of those ingredients is just as important.

All meat, is NOT created equal. Many (most?) manufacturers use rotting, diseased meat that was turned away for use as human grade. You may have seen one of the many stories on dogs getting sick and dying from euthanasia drugs found in their dog food. Label said meat... not required to tell you any more than that. Scary? Yes!

What should I buy?

Here's what I currently feed.

- Darwin's Naturals – Click the link below for a deal on an introductory package. (They also offer **prescription food** for some common issues.
<https://share.darwinpet.com/Kristen11>
- Open Farm
- Small Batch
- Farmers Dog (occasionally)

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- Homemade for my little guy who is prone to pancreatitis issues

I highly recommend getting this list from Truth About Pet Food [2021 List](https://truthaboutpetfood.com/2021-list)
<https://truthaboutpetfood.com/the-list/>

Tip: Go to the company websites. They have some great educational information! Especially Wysong & Darwin's. Call or email them if you have specific questions/dietary/health concerns.

Is good food expensive? It's all relative.

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What about table scraps?

If it's meets the "good food" requirement's, sure! Meat, veggies, all good to share. Be aware of how much you give and reduce (or eliminate) your dogs regular breakfast/dinner accordingly. With meat, we tend to want to feed the fat scraps to our pets. DON'T. While they do need fats, excess fats can cause issues such as pancreatitis.

To curb begging, try setting the scraps aside and feeding later in your dog's bowl.

A word on making food for your dog.

When done right this is your healthiest option. Not done right- A typical home cooked dog food I see is chicken breast and carrots, peas or green beans and heavy on grains and sweet potatoes. So?

No variety, not enough protein, no good fats, high in carbs, few vitamin sources, no organ meats (minerals) no calcium sources etc. Not nutrient dense ingredients.

Source good ingredients (grass fed, pasture raised, organic), make a variety of meals and make sure to meet all the nutritional requirements. Can it be done? Yes! Quite easily. You can purchase Mercola Meal Mix, or something similar, to add to the food so it will include all the vitamins and minerals necessary.

What I want you to take away.

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There are many pet foods available with new ones on the market every day. Don't just ask for a recommendation. Educate yourself so you know the what's and why's that make up a good healthy diet. With that knowledge, you'll be able to decide for yourself what the right choices are for you and your pets. Keep in mind that things change, the foods you choose to feed today may not be available or be the same quality two years from now.

A few words about weight.

When I see an overweight dog my heart breaks. When it's a young dog I see a dog that if anything should be on the thin side because they are still growing. I see a dog that will not reach its potential for a long happy life. They will have joint issues along with other weight related problems. They will tire quickly and miss out on play with friends and all the active fun dogs need to live their best and longest life. They will probably be called a couch potato and an "inside" dog. If a dog is a couch potato or inside dog the likely scenario is that the owner is and the dog adapted.

When I see an older overweight dog, I typically see the bag of medication, poor quality "food" and often bags of treats that are in no way nutritious or needed. I see the lack of muscle tone, the lumps that everyone seems to accept as "normal" and ok.

What I see most is the lack of sparkle in their eyes.

We have cared for well over a thousand dogs over the years.

I have often seen dogs of the same breed, same age, one healthy, happy and "young". The other old, tired, sore, lumpy, and lacking that sparkle in their eyes. Often the dog that's actually a bit (or a lot) older looks many years younger than the other.

In every case the "younger" dog is eating a healthy, appropriate diet and the other is eating a poor quality diet.

And finally, YOU are in control of your dogs weight. It's not about them getting less exercise. It's about them eating too much food. I hear excuses all the time usually the same two or three. Not reasons, excuses. It's 99.9% of the time 100% the owners doing. The dog suffers for it.

A Word About Teeth

Bad breath is NOT normal! Bacteria from dirty teeth and gums goes directly into your pets bloodstream and negatively affects their health. We have seen several dogs and cats with organ infections (including heart) all from bad teeth.

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In all of my experience, with my pet's as well as the hundreds of guests that have stayed with us, I have NEVER seen a dental "treat" of any sort that works. They are made of things I would not give my pet. They add unnecessary calories and they cost money that can be better spent.

A marrow bone or other real bone once a week will help. So will brushing ;)

I have always felt that I chose to have my pets, they did not choose me. In choosing to have them in my life I accepted the responsibility for their lives. To me that means nothing less than providing the best life I can for them. The more I learn, the better I do. 😊