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Wendy Volhard's

Homemade Dog Food Recipe

Making your own dog food is becoming a popular option, although it's hardly a new one. Every dog alive today can trace its ancestry back to dogs that were raised on homemade diets. The dog food industry, in comparison to dogs themselves, is young — maybe 50 to 60 years — although canned meat for dogs was sold at the turn of the 20th century. Originally, the commercial foods were made to supplement homemade food.

Why make your own?

Many dogs do not thrive on commercially prepared rations. They exhibit disease states, often mistaken for allergies, which are deficiency diseases caused by feeding cereal-based foods. A dog in his natural state would eat meat. His prey would be that of a grass-eating animal — an herbivore. Along with the internal organs and the muscle meat, he would eat the predigested grasses and plants of the carcass. Those grasses and plants would consist of no more than 20 to 25 percent of his total diet. He would raid nests from ground-breeding birds and eat the eggs, and he would catch the occasional insect. He would maybe forage on certain weeds and grasses and eat berries and fruit.

In formulating the Natural Diet, we stayed within these boundaries — with the exception of the insects. Although domestication has changed the appearance of many dogs through selective breeding, the digestive tract of the dog remains substantially the same as it always was.

The Natural Diet consists of two meals. One is a cereal meal plus supplements, which makes up 25 percent of the total diet. The other is a raw meat meal plus supplements, which is 75 percent of the total diet. In separating these meals — both of which are balanced — the digestive system uses enzymes present in the stomach and intestines to efficiently and quickly break down the food. It decreases the load on the digestive organs, which are maintained in a healthy state for a longer period of time.

For more information on how to make your own food, read *The Holistic Guide for a Healthy Dog*, 2nd Edition, by Wendy Volhard and Kerry Brown, DVM (Howell Book House, 2000).

Benefits of the Natural Diet

The advantages of feeding the Natural Diet are many. Health and longevity are increased, there is resistance to disease, and the diet can be tailored to individual needs. This is beneficial for some breeds of dogs, especially imported dogs or relatives of imported dogs, who have difficulty in digesting corn contained in the majority of prepared commercial diets. The diet allows individual ingredients to be substituted as necessary. Dogs are able to digest and utilize the Natural Diet, and stool volume is small. The diet contains a lot of moisture in the natural ingredients, and therefore the dog drinks little water. Young dogs raised on this diet grow more slowly than dogs raised on commercial food and have fewer musculoskeletal problems. Fleas, ticks, and worms are almost unheard of on the Natural Diet. Diabetes, skin, ear, and eye problems are rare, and so is bloat. Teeth rarely, if ever, have to be cleaned. Overall vitality and energy are unequaled. And dogs love to eat it.

Transferring to the Natural Diet

Unless your dog is already used to a raw diet, you need to put him on the following short-term transitional meal plan to avoid digestive upsets that may come from the switch to the Natural Diet.

Note: This diet is for a 50-pound dog. Adjust it according to your dog's weight. And make sure that fresh water is always available for your dog.

Day 1: No food. At mealtime, feed 2 tsp. honey mixed with a cup of lukewarm water.

Day 2: In the morning, give honey and water as in Day 1. In the evening, give 1 cup yogurt or kefir and 2 tsp. honey.

Day 3: In the morning, give 1 cup yogurt or kefir and 2 tsp. honey. In the evening, give 1 cup yogurt or kefir, 2 tsp. honey, and 1 tsp. dry or 2 Tbsp. fresh herbs.

Day 4: In the morning, give 2 cups yogurt or kefir, 2 tsp. honey, 1 Tbsp. dry or 2 Tbsp. fresh herbs, and 1/2 ounce (dry weight) cooked oatmeal. In the evening, give 1 cup yogurt or kefir, 2 tsp. honey, 1 tsp. dry to 2 Tbsp. fresh herbs, 2 ounces (dry weight) cooked oatmeal, and 1 garlic capsule.

Day 5: In the morning, give 1/2 normal ration of cereal and supplements as listed in the Natural Diet chart shown below. In the evening, give 1/2 normal ration of meat meal as listed on the Natural Diet chart.

Day 6: In the morning, give the normal amount of food as listed for Days 1–6. In the evening, give the normal amount of food as listed on Days 1–6.

Now your dog should be ready to follow the full Natural Diet listed below.

Natural Diet — 50-Pound Dog

Breakfast (days 1–6)

3 oz. grain mix (dry)
2 tsp. molasses
2 tsp. safflower oil
200 IU Vitamin E
200 mg Vitamin C
50 mg Vitamin B Complex
1 1/4 egg, small (4 times per week)
1/2 cup yogurt or kefir

Dinner (days 1–6)

12 oz. meat (days 1–5)
2 1/2 oz. liver (days 1–5)
14 oz. cottage cheese (day 6)
200 mg Vitamin C
1 tsp. cod liver oil
1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
1/2 tsp. kelp
1 tsp. brewer's yeast
1 1/2 garlic capsule (325 mg)
2 1/2 bone meal
2 Tbsp. wheat germ
3 Tbsp. wheat bran
2 tsp. dry herbs
2 Tbsp. fruit (alternate days)

Breakfast (day 7)

2 1/3 oz. grain mix (dry)
200 mg Vitamin C
50 mg Vitamin B Complex
1 cup yogurt or kefir
4 tsp. honey

Dinner (day 7)

Fast

Give your dog a bone

Once or twice a week, give your dog a bone as a special treat. They love large beef bones, raw chicken necks, and the tips off chicken wings. If you're not sure about how long these things have been in the supermarket case, douse them with boiling water to kill any bacteria before feeding. The side benefit of feeding bones is that your dog has beautiful, pearly white teeth that don't need to be cleaned. Feeding too many bones, however, will give him constipation and hard, chalky stools. Be careful, too, to give your dog only large bones that can't splinter.

For more information, see "The Holistic Guide for a Healthy Dog", Wendy Volhard & Kerry Brown, DVM (Howell Book House, 2000), available from handcraftcollars.com.