

Fresh Food Diets -- The Best Choice for Optimum Health for Dogs and Cats!

All of our animal companions -- reptile, avian, rodent, equine, canine, or feline -- benefit from eating diets natural to their species, whether raw or home cooked.

Dogs and Cats Thrive On Meat Based Diets

Balanced fresh food (meat, bone, and vegetables) diets are more nutritious than the modern (dry food) diet, because raw, fresh foods provide much more complete and balanced nutrition than that found in highly processed foods.

The natural diet of dogs and cats contains a variety of raw, real foods teeming with bacteria. These foods are high in protein and low in carbohydrate. Below are approximate levels for dogs; natural cat diets are higher in protein and lower in carbohydrate. (1)

Natural Diet of Dogs	55% Protein (Dry Matter),	14% Carbohydrate (DM))
Dry Dog Food:	25% +/- Protein (DM),	40 – 70% carbohydrate (DM)

That's a radical change!

In the natural diet, micronutrients include the natural, organic forms of vitamins and minerals, and thousands of different antioxidants. In dry food diets, many of the micronutrients are human-synthesized vitamins and minerals. Formulas contain only the 23 components deemed "essential."

This is far fewer than are considered essential in human foods.

There is a world of difference between synthesized vitamins and minerals and those found in highly processed, cooked commercial foods. Hundreds of studies show that people and laboratory animals that eat fresh vegetables and fruits are healthier and have a lower incidence of cancer, stroke and heart disease than those whose intake of micronutrients is primarily from human-made forms. There is no reason to think that our animals are different, yet most of them get almost all their vitamins and minerals in synthetic, human-made, forms.

Dogs and cats diagnosed with "unsolvable" problems (arthritis, diabetes, a wide range of gastrointestinal problems, allergies) often recover completely when eating a properly prepared fresh food diet. There are conditions for which a cooked diet might be better, and animals with health problems should be closely supervised by a veterinarian with extensive fresh food experience.

Whether we can totally solve health problems or not, by providing stressed bodies with the tools for healing, we can optimize the outcome.

Dogs and cats are designed to eat food in its natural state

Canine and feline digestive systems have not changed from the time when they were feral carnivores. There is little debate about this. Dr. Buddington of Mississippi State University, a noted expert on the physiology of mammals, summarizes: "Comparative studies have revealed a close relationship between intestinal characteristics, the evolutionary diet, and requirements of energy and nutrients". (2)

Dogs and cats live in a bacterial world. Your dog goes out for a short walk in your garden. She absorbs just a few grams of soil, and then comes in and licks her pads. In those two grams of soil, there were probably billions of bacteria of hundreds of different species, some friendly and some not. Consumption of bacteria is natural for dogs and cats.

Safety of Commercial Raw Diets

Commercial raw diets have been on the market for more than 20 years. Combined, the raw diet manufacturers have fed more than 100,000 dogs without a single documented death due to bacterial problems.

Some people worry about bacteria, and a small percentage of animals have trouble with some foods. Raw meat based pet food companies and veterinarians who use fresh food diets in their practices investigate reports they hear of problems with food. They are often able to sort out what the difficulty was, and food has rarely been the problem.

Safety of Commercial Dry Food Diets

The safety record of the dry pet food industry is not as good as that of the raw diet industry. We can all recall episodes of dozens of dogs dying from eating bad or moldy dry dog foods. In 2003, for example, 48 dogs were reported to have died soon after consuming a so-called "natural" dry dog food. These deaths are just the tip of the iceberg. Read *See Spot Live Longer* to learn about mycotoxins, toxic waste products from molds which are unavoidable in dry dog foods that use low-cost grains. Poor home storage contributes to these problems.

Only a few of the animals that consume mycotoxin-contaminated foods will die quickly. Chronic, low level ingestion of these toxins causes cancer 3 to 5 years later. Consumption of mycotoxin-contaminated dry pet foods may be a major contributing factor to the cancer epidemic in pets.

Choosing Commercial Fresh Food Diets

To feed your animals the absolute best diet, grow your own livestock and produce on your organic family farm. If you can do this, or patronize a family farm coop, you'll be doing the best you possibly can.

Commercial products make it easy to feed a fresh food diet. Dozens of raw food brands are now available at many pet food and natural food stores. Some are available by mail. If you do some research, it is easy to tell the difference between excellent commercial raw diets and poor ones. Use products with all human-edible ingredients and avoid low quality ingredients. The F.D.A. Center for Veterinary Medicine issued model guidelines for raw pet diet manufacturers in 2002. The guidelines recommended the use of human-edible ingredients. However, manufacturers are not yet required to follow this recommendation.

The best manufacturers combine knowledge of modern canine nutritional science with an understanding of the ancestral diet of dogs and cats to produce a "complete and balanced" raw diet. The labels on these packages have a statement that the food meets the AAFCO (American Association of Feed Control Officials, the people who regulate pet foods) nutrient profiles. "Component" raw products supply "meat and bone" or "meat, bone and vegetable" mixes, with instructions to buyers to add the missing ingredients. These products can be excellent, as long as you follow their supplementation recommendations.

Conscientious manufacturers test their foods periodically. They provide complete nutrient profiles and technical support to you and your veterinarian.

Making Your Own

If you want to make a fresh food diet for your animals, go slowly, do it right, and learn first. Improperly prepared diets can be a health hazard. There are many books about raw and fresh diets. You'll learn that there is no one definitive "right" answer. Some books are rather casual about nutrition, some are difficult to understand. We urge you to read several books before deciding what the best choice is for your animals, always comparing recommendations to the natural diet of the species. The support of a veterinarian skilled in fresh food diets can be of great assistance. (the booklet, *Dr. Becker's Real Food for Dogs and Cats*, provides a balanced, tested program for dogs and cats)

Is Fresh Food Best? We Think So!

The health benefits of a fresh food diet for your four legged friends are similar to those for humans, and just as important. Even a small amount of fresh food can have a big impact. In almost all animals the switch to a fresh diet, in the balance natural to the species, improves health, and can prolong life and vitality.

There's no substitute for fresh food! Your animals will thank you.

P.S. Cat People: Your cats might not thank you immediately!

(1) Calculated using data from Landry and Van Kruiningen, "Food Habits of Feral Carnivores: A Review of Stomach Content Analysis" *Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association*, Nov 1979.

(2) Buddington, Randal. "Structure and Functions of the Dog and Cat Intestine," *Proceedings of the 1996 Iams International Nutrition Symposium*. 61- 71.

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