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## Nutrition for Dogs

In the wild, dogs are primarily carnivores (meat eaters). Wild dogs eat all parts of their kill - which includes muscle, bones and intestines. From the intestines and gut they obtained vegetable matter, important for the dogs diet. They also supplemented their diet with plants, berries and fruit, making the belief that "dogs only eat meat" incorrect.

Dogs cannot grow and remain healthy on a diet that is composed solely of meat. A diet that is primarily meat is deficient in vitamins and minerals and has an unsatisfactory Calcium:Phosphorus balance.

It is important to bear in mind when feeding your dog, you need to meet several dietary components:

Protein      Carbohydrates      Vegetable matter      Fat      Vitamins & Minerals

Commercial dog food companies market food to owners as we are the ones buying the food not our dogs. What is balanced for us, isn't necessarily balanced for dogs. Good quality dog food offers a complete balanced diet for our dogs. Not all commercial dog food diets are complete or balanced, so read the packaging carefully.

Commercial diets come in several forms:

### Moist Diets

These are canned diets. They are very palatable and easily digested. The down side - they are expensive because you are paying for 70% water. These moist foods provide no dental exercise and their protein content is very poor. This is the most expensive way to buy dog food.

### Semi moist diets

These are Fritz like loaves, semi-moist kibble and minces. These too are expensive and provide no dental exercise. These foods can also contain dangerous preservatives.

### Dry Diets

This is the most economical way to buy dog food and you get many extras. Good quality dry foods contain more calories per unit and therefore have a higher protein content. This means you feed less food as it is more

calorie dense and the bag of dog food goes a lot further. Look for diets that contain Omega fatty acids, dental defence and good digestible vegetable matter such as beet pulp and pre-biotics.

***Hill's Science Diet dog food provides precisely balanced nutrition for a visible difference.***

- ✓ Nutrition to improve skin & coat in 30 days (Omega-6 fatty acids)
- ✓ Clinically proven antioxidant benefits
- ✓ No artificial colours, flavours, or preservatives
- ✓ Natural high quality ingredients for better digestibility
- ✓ Fresh Chicken for Strong, lean muscles
- ✓ Vitamins C + E for a healthy immune system

When feeding any diet read the manufacturer's guide to feeding amounts—these are only estimations and every dog is individual and may require a little more or less depending on how active they are.

### **Feeding Puppies**

A puppy has very different requirements for their diet to that of an adult dog. Puppies are rapidly growing and utilise food for two purposes: to maintain bodily function and to develop new body tissue such as bone, muscle and fat. Puppies only get one chance to grow, so it is really important we do the best for them at this growth stage. With premium puppy foods they formulate the protein and calcium content to meet the demands of such rapid growth.

Milk has very little calcium and should not be fed to puppies because it can cause diarrhoea. Fresh water is all they require to drink.

Puppies need to be fed 3 or 4 small meals a day. As they get older feed twice a day. Over 6 months of age once a day feeding in the morning is adequate.

### **You should NEVER EVER give your dog cooked bones!**

Cooked bones cannot be digested and will splinter. They can get caught in the mouth or cause constipation or bowel problems. Always supervise your puppy with bones and remove them when they are finished chewing. Please ask your vet which bones may be suitable for your dog.

### **Feeding an adult dog**

After 12-18 months of age, one meal a day is sufficient for the average dog. Dry food and fresh water is an ideal diet for your dog. The amount you feed will vary with the type of food you are feeding, age of dog, size etc. As dogs get older they become less active therefore the amount of food given should decrease accordingly so your dog doesn't become overweight.

### **Nutrition Tips**

There are a lot of different diets out there. Here is a quick guide to help select the best one for your dog.

**Look for quality** - Check out the ingredients on the back of the packaging to find out what's really in the food.

**Look for value** - You will find that with high quality dry food like, Hills Science Diet, you don't need to feed as much and the bag will last a long time (up to a few months). Be sure to compare on a cost per meal basis.

**Stick with one food** - A complete and balanced dry food is just that, other than water your dog needs nothing else. Home cooked meals are time consuming and may not have the required nutrient your dog needs. Adding excess supplements such as vitamins and minerals can be harmful to your dog.

**Where to buy** - Murray Bridge Veterinary Clinic can provide expert, independent advice on feeding, based on your dog's age, breed size and any noticeable sensitivities.

Some dogs may be required to eat a Veterinary Prescribed Diet to manage a health issue. Your Veterinarian will discuss these diets with you .