

The Dog Food Project

No matter how little money and how few possessions you own, having a dog makes you rich. - Louis Sabi



Choosing the right food

I have touched on ingredient quality in many areas of this website, but it is also very important to choose a food that meets your dog's individual needs.

Not every food on the market works for every dog out there, which is why I do not like to make blanket recommendations without knowing anything about a particular dog's diet and health history. It is also the reason I refuse to publish a list of "top foods" - my mission is educating people on product quality, not promoting specific brands or products.

After ingredient quality, the next important thing about a food is that your dog must like it, since even the highest quality food on the planet won't do if your dog refuses to eat it because he or she doesn't like the taste. Preferences vary widely - just like in humans!

Some dogs do better with a lower or higher fat content than average, some need more or less fiber to produce consistent stools, and some dogs thrive on poultry-based foods while others cannot tolerate them and need a different protein source. Specific types of starches and fibers might give one dog gas but work out perfectly for another.

Another important point is how much variety one single food really needs to provide. Many people think that much-advertised products with long ingredient lists, including several types of proteins, grains, fruits, veggies and other supplements must be better to feed than "boring" formulations with limited ingredients. Fact is that the more ingredients a food has, the smaller the number of individuals who will be able to tolerate the product, and your dog might just be one of them! Feeding a more limited formula of commercial food and providing variety by adding healthy, fresh, unprocessed food items (of which you know your dog tolerates them) is a much better approach and actually adds nutritional value.

It is also not beneficial at all to feed every protein source you can get your hands on - just because you can. Stick with the more common ones like chicken, turkey, lamb, beef and fish and avoid the more exotic types. In case dogs develop food allergies, they will need to be switched to food ingredients they have never been exposed to before in life. The more different sources you have previously fed, the more difficult it will be for you to come up with a good feeding plan in such a situation. So make sure you always read ingredient labels before buying food and treats, and keep the "exotic" meats in reserve should you need them one day.

Don't be afraid to experiment feeding different brands though, so you can find out what works for your dog, but give it time - unless there are immediate signs of intolerance, 3-4 months is a good time frame to see short-term as well as long-term effects.

To provide variety in an appropriate way, it would not be a bad idea at all to rotate between several high quality brands of dry food every 3-4 months, provided your dog accepts and tolerates a food switch every so often. For individuals with sensitive stomachs the stress of digestive upset negates the benefit of rotating food products though.

General

[Main Page](#)

[About the Author](#)

[What Readers say](#)

[Dog Discussions Forum](#)

Commercial Dry Foods

[Introduction](#)

[Label Information 101](#)

[Identifying better products](#)

[Ingredients to avoid](#)

[Product List](#)

Specific Product Groups

[Organic Dog Food](#)

[Grain Free Dog Food](#)

[Vegetarian & Vegan Dog Food](#)

Articles

[Meat vs. Meat Meal **NEW!**](#)

[Choosing the right food](#)

[Feeding Puppies](#)

[Feeding Senior Dogs](#)

[Canine Obesity](#)

[Is too much protein harmful?](#)

[Grading kibble - easily?](#)

["Five Star Foods"](#)

Other Diet Topics

[Questions on Diet](#)

[Myths about Feeding](#)

[The Yuck Factor](#)

[Where the money goes](#)

[Natural Supplementation](#)

[Menadione \(Vitamin K3\)](#)

[Nutrient Requirements](#)

[Links & Resources](#)

Nutrition Primer

[Nutrient Overview](#)

[Water](#)

[Protein](#)

[Fat](#)

Carbohydrates
Fiber
Vitamins
Minerals
Essential Fatty Acids
Probiotics



When feeding primarily dry food, don't mix different types, since every brand follows a specific formulation and nutritional philosophy, developed by the manufacturer. All products are formulated to supply nutrients in a ration of a certain size (kibble size and density vary from brand to brand), based on the body weight. Instead of getting "the best of both", your dog isn't going to eat enough of either one to get the full benefit of a particular nutritional system. Last but not least, if digestive upset occurs, it will take so much longer to figure out what exactly caused it, compared to just eliminating either the commercial food or whatever extras were fed recently.

Sabine Contreras, Canine Care and Nutrition Consultant, offers [personalized feeding plans](#) for dogs of all sizes, breeds and ages, no matter if they are companions, performance, working or show dogs.

Last updated 1/25/09 9:26pm, © Sabine Contreras 2004-2009. This website is a Strange World production. [Want one like it](#)