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Nutrition 101

“You are what you eat. What would YOU like to be?” ~ Julie Murphy

Ruby Recommends:

There are many excellent resources for holistic pet nutrition. Check out the following for more information.

Books:

Dr. Becker's Real Food for Dogs & Cats by Dr. Karen Becker

Unlocking the Ancestral Canine Diet by Steve Brown

Natural Nutrition for Dogs & Cats by Kymythy Schultze

Websites:

dogsnaturallymagazine.com

feline-nutrition.org

Your Dog and Cat Are Carnivores

Your dog has evolved from a wolf. Although domestication and breeding has changed the appearance of many dogs, they are still physiologically the same as their wild relatives – their digestive system and nutritional needs have not changed. Dogs' jaws, teeth, highly acidic stomachs and short intestinal tracts all dictate that they are designed to be primarily carnivores. Although dogs have no biological need for carbohydrates, small amounts of raw or cooked vegetables and fruit are not harmful and can be beneficial. Cats are obligate carnivores and their diet should be comprised almost exclusively of meats. When choosing foods for your pet, whether raw, home-cooked, canned or kibble, ensure they have a high meat content.

What about Bones?

Chewing on and eating raw bones is natural for dogs and cats. Bones are an excellent source of calcium and phosphorus, as well as trace minerals including iron, manganese, copper, iodine and zinc. Bones also contain collagen, chondroitin sulphate and essential amino acids. One of the best ways for a dog to deal with stress is by chewing on a bone—especially when poor weather interferes with regular exercise. As added benefits, bones exercise the jaw and help keep your pet's teeth and gums healthy and clean. Raw chicken necks and backs can be especially good for cleaning teeth.

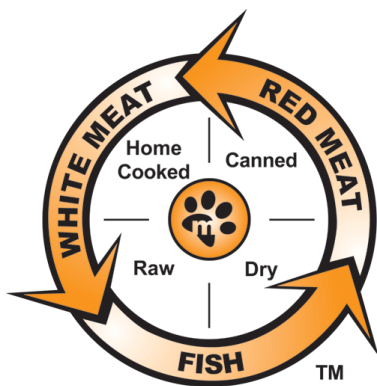
Ensure that bones are only served raw, not cooked, as cooked bones can splinter. Choose bones that match your pet's chewing style. Supervision is always recommended.

Food for Thought...

Imagine going to the grocery store to shop the aisles of dry, processed “people kibble”. The selections are labelled “100% Complete and Balanced” to meet all your nutritional needs. You are to choose a package and then eat this, and nothing else, for every meal, every day for the rest of your life. Do you think you'll enjoy optimal health and vitality? Would you not crave some *real* food?

The Importance of Variety

Good health is based on a varied diet of high-quality foods. We understand this concerning our own health, so why is it right to assume that one particular formulation of food meets the nutritional requirements of our pets? Each meat has varying levels of protein, fat, amino acids, vitamins and minerals. Rotating among a variety of foods can ensure your pet is receiving a balanced diet.



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Ruby Recommends:

Don't panic if you run out of pet food. Your pet likely will enjoy one of the following options as an occasional meal replacement.

- Scrambled eggs
- Canned tuna or sardines
- Plain, unseasoned meat (cooked or raw)

Enzymes & Probiotics

"All disease begins in the gut"
~ Hippocrates

Our pets live in a high-stress world—their immune systems are under attack from processed foods, pesticides, environmental toxins and the like. Since 70-80% of the immune system is in the gut, one of the best ways to strengthen the immune system is by supplementing the diet with digestive enzymes and probiotics, such as Opta-Gest, raw tripe and Olie Naturals New Beginnings. Even raw-fed pets can benefit from such supplements, especially if they are sensitive. Ask our knowledgeable staff which supplement would be the best option for your pet.

Fruits and Veggies

Dogs and cats have no biological requirement for carbohydrates; however, adding some plant material can be beneficial, especially for dogs. Virtually any fruit or vegetable (lightly cooked, shredded or whole, raw or frozen) may be fed to your pet. Be sure to avoid grapes, raisins and onions, as they can be toxic. Your pet is an individual—be creative and have fun trying out different foods! You may be surprised by your dog's interest in broccoli or your cat's taste for cantaloupe.

Canned pumpkin is often a special treat for dogs, and in addition to supplying many nutrients, it offers the added benefit of regulating stool, as it can help with constipation and diarrhea.

Think Outside the Bag

Dogs have been domesticated for more than 40,000 years. Dry formula (kibble) foods became popular after WWII, and were created as a convenience for pet owners, not for their nutritional benefits. Canada and the United States feed more kibble than any other nation, and we also have the least healthy pets, who suffer from ailments that once were unheard of or, at least, uncommon for dogs and cats, such as obesity, diabetes, hypo/hyperthyroid and cancer.

Moisture is Key

If you think about it, wild carnivores never eat dry food. Kibble is popular because it is convenient and inexpensive, but it is not biologically appropriate for dogs and cats. Consider your pet eating kibble as being the equivalent of a person eating crackers all day – it would take a lot of water to make up for consuming a diet that is so dry! Even though your pet may seem to drink a lot of water, that is not natural. Even the best kibbles, due to their low moisture content, can be taxing on your pets' organs and digestive system and can lead to health problems.

Many holistic veterinarians believe that feeding cats an exclusively dry diet is the main cause of bladder and kidney stones, obesity, diabetes, FLUTD (Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease) and renal failure. Weight control becomes much easier once carbohydrate-dense foods are avoided.

If you choose to feed dry foods, you can benefit your pets' health by adding some high-quality raw, canned or "table foods" to their diets.

Benefits of Feeding High Quality Raw

- Improved health, energy & longevity
- Healthy, clean teeth & gums
- Relief from allergies & G.I. issues
- Increased immunity
- Less shedding
- No breath & body odour
- Improved weight control
- Very low stool volume
- Shiny coat & healthy skin

