

## So, what should I feed my dog?

By Jeff Coltenback

Thank you for coming back and supporting Paws for Peace. This is the follow up article to last week's "About Commercial Dog food" story. I know many people are aware of the sub-standard ingredients present in today's pet feed. So, I won't bore you with the details. But, please let us know if you ever want an article breaking down dog food ingredients. I'd be glad to offer you my opinion.

When it comes to pet feed today, I think our biggest challenge today is trying to figure out who to believe. I can't tell you how many times clients come to me and tell me that their Vet or dog trainer or Groomer told them feeding brand X is perfectly fine for their dogs. For obvious reasons, I cannot implicate any dog food manufacturers specifically. But, almost always, these "recommended" brands are found in aisle 8 of the supermarket or cost savings clubs and even the large Pet Super Stores. I am not condemning these aforementioned pet pros. They are some talented people in the Pet Care Industry. However, when many of them recommend inferior foods, this is all I need to know about how much they care about educating themselves on nutrition. You can tell me what a pet care professional recommends, and why, and that will tell me how much they know about the needs of carnivores.

Nutrition is one of the most important factors for all of us, humans and pets alike. Why would Pet Care Experts not educate themselves on one of the important factors that could help them care for their clients' pets? Answer: I have no idea. But, I know some Vets who do. And, I work with them often when I have a client with a medical problem. Thankfully, more and more Professionals in the Veterinary field are dedicating their time, money and energy on providing advancements in the pet nutrition field.

The last article I wrote, stressed the importance of feeding fresh food as opposed to dry, commercial cereal. I realize this is just not feasible for all pet owners. So, I will offer a food ranking with types of foods. The rankings below are merely my opinion for a healthy animal. Pets with medical problems may require different nutritional rations. Always consult your pet professional or veterinarian when switching diets. Of course, I offer counseling worldwide with clients across the country, in Amsterdam, Australia and the UK.

- 1. RAW meat-based rations** – Properly prepared raw diets are the absolute best thing for dogs (and cats & ferrets too). There are many packaged frozen-raw goods nowadays for you to choose from that are superior to processed food. If you decide to prepare your own homemade raw diet, there are also many resources to help you along the way. Future articles will talk in depth about raw and how to switch, what to expect, etc. And,

please don't get me started on raw meat being too high in protein for dogs. We'll have a whole article dedicated to this, including protein restriction in dogs with kidney issues.

2. **Home-cooked** – Not that I agree, but many people are leery about feeding raw because of the possibility of harmful bacteria. So, they opt to feed a home cooked diet. Still this is a far better option than feeding highly processed foods. For those concerned with bacterial contamination, here's food for thought (pun intended); in the last 5 years dating back to 2003, almost ALL of the pet food related recalls due to contamination occurred in PROCESSED food. Don't take my word for it. Go to CDC's website and good dog food recalls. Inferior dry foods and cans, pig ears, rawhides and jerky treats have all been associated with some form of bacteria-related recall in the recent past. More about bacteria in future articles.
3. **All canned** – Yes, an all canned diet is superior to an all dry diet. Canned foods are only cooked once. They are not overly processed. And, the really good foods are simple and nutritious. You may think, even may have been told, "My dog needs to chew!" My question would be "who told you this". Whoever told you this, stop taking advice from them. Why you ask? Simple. Dogs don't chew. Wait....let me rephrase; It is an anatomical impossibility for a dog to chew. First of all, a dog's jaw is not designed to grind food particles. A dog's jaw is not capable of the chewing motion that people and chimps and cows and horses are capable of. A dog's jaw only moves up and down, like an alligator. A dog's teeth (even little foofie dogs) are designed to tear, crush and shred animal tissue and swallow chunks of flesh. Additionally, unlike omnivores or herbivores, a dog's lips are on the side of their muzzle not in front (this is why kibble flies out of their mouth when they attempt to "chew". More about this in, you guessed it, future articles.
4. **Mixture of Kibble and cans** – Some folks just feel bad and feel their dog like the crunchies. By all means, this is perfectly acceptable. It is your dog. And, I applaud anyone who takes a strong stance for what they feel is the best thing for their pet. If you must feed kibble, try to add some high quality canned food to the diet. It offers less processed protein, and much needed moisture.
5. **High quality kibble** – I am not going to go into detail about what manufacturers are good or bad. What you want to look for in a dry food is an ingredient list that is high in animal protein and low in fiber. If it's over 3% fiber, that could mean trouble. Dogs have a very low requirement for fiber. And, high fiber could mean the presence of inferior ingredients. You also need a food that is high in animal protein. Some foods that satisfy these criteria are Abady, Innova EVO, Orijen, Merrick's Before Gran, Nature's Variety Instinct etc. And, there are many more good foods out there, especially with grain-free movement upon us.

The list above is a high level overview. We will continue to probe and offer in-depth analysis of many different food types and pros and cons to feeding them. Hopefully, the above ranking offers some information to get you started. And, the bottom line is this; you have to feel comfortable with what you feed your pet. There are many factors that differ from person to person. Some folks cannot afford to feed raw or home prepared. If this is the case feed a high quality kibble. Even more expensive kibbles are “cheaper” than the cheap stuff because the cost per feeding is less expensive. For instance, a cheap low quality supermarket brand recommends feeding a 50lb dog 3-4 cups per day. A high quality dry food recommends feeding 2-2 ½ cups per day. Do the math. Even if the “more expensive” food costs twice as much as the cheap food, you will eventually be saving money. It may take 5-6 bags of food. But, eventually, in the long run you will be saving money and feeding you pet a better diet. If money is not an issue, by all means feed a diet containing real food. As always, I must finish this by reiterating to you to always consult with your pet professional or veterinarian when dealing with your pet’s care.

Finally, I’d like to thank you for reading this. You may agree or disagree and that’s ok. I thank you for supporting Paws for Peace. I hope my suggestions can somehow help you in your journey. Keep in mind; I am a Holistic Pet Care Consultant. And, we will be exploring the overall care of canines in future articles. From nutrition to training to supplements and vaccines, we will cover everything you need to provide a healthy future for your pet. Thanks for reading. See you soon!

Holistically yours,

Jeff Coltenback