

You and Your Pet

Pets need balanced diet to stay healthy

By DR. AL THOMPSON
 Nutrition as it applies to the dog might be regarded as one of the most controversial subjects in Small Animal Veterinary Practice. If you asked 10 veterinarians how to feed your dog you would most likely get 10 different answers; none incorrect, all suitably researched and with excellent reasoning behind their methods.

With this in mind, it must be realized that what follows is my opinion and only that based on my studies and 16 years experience. However, I am always open to new suggestions and ideas based on new research and discussions with breeders and dog owners, because after all these people are best suited to observe subtle responses in their dog to changes in diet.

The average Canadian dog is better fed than the average Canadian dog owner.

We owe this to our pet food industry where intense competition for the consumer dollar leads to a high quality product at a reasonable price. However, it should be realized that canned or packaged garbage masquerading as dog food is also available.

Very little regulation exists as to what can be sold as dog food. It is a rarity to deal with dietary deficiency, in fact it is usually the opposite; more often than not our most difficult nutritional challenge is controlling the excess — the obese dog.

As a rule when I am discussing nutrition with a client, cooking or formulating a dog's ration from human food is rarely discussed. I cannot understand why people feel that they can formulate a ration from table scraps and end up with a better diet than companies such as Purina, Gaines or Shur Gain, who have invested ex-

tensive money and years of research producing an economical palatable diet which meets all the known nutritional requirements of the canine.

THREE FORMS
 Three forms of dog food currently available are dry, semi-moist and canned. Dry dog food (kibble, meal), today is generally the expansion type available in bulk bags. Semi-moist diets (burger type), are prepared to look like meat and are available in easy to use meal sized pouches.

Dry foods are as a rule completely balanced and nutritionally sound. They can be used on a self feed basis and generally are the most economical form of feeding.

Semi-moist foods are high quality products, however, they contain large amounts of unnecessary sugar to increase palatability. Generally the pack-

aging and presentation of semi-moist products leads to a high priced product, but a very convenient food for small breeds of dogs.

Canned foods are more palatable than either of the other two forms, but as a rule are not as well balanced (high phosphorous-low calcium) and because of their high palatability cannot be self feed. Their musky composition often leads to dental disease — the accumulation of tartar and subsequent periodontitis resulting in premature loss of teeth.

Getting adjusted into a high quality diet begins as a puppy. Attempts to change the diet of a 10 year old toy Poodle fed steak and potatoes all his life will usually end up in failure (however it is worth a try). Find out what the puppy had been fed at the breeders and if change is necessary make that

change gradually.

I believe all pups should be weaned onto a dry puppy food. (Purina, Gaines, Iams, Science Diet, etc.). Childrens pabulum and milk should not be used. Selecting a diet and method of feeding is dependent on the breed of dog and life style of both dog and owner. If the animal is expected to work (obedience, trial show, sled dog, etc.) then a high energy diet is necessary.

SELF FEEDING
 In the average urban setting where the dog is performing a role as a pet only, I strongly suggest introducing the puppy to self feeding. In this method the animal feeds himself from a container where a high quality brand name dry food is always available. He can eat as much as he wants, whenever he wants. An available supply of fresh water is essential.

Self feeding offers many advantages; a

pup maintains an even level of nutrients in his blood stream, eating when he is hungry instead of gorging two or three times a day. This program minimizes boredom and reduces damage dogs will do to furniture and rugs.

If the owner is away from home during the scheduled feeding time, the dog can satisfy his hunger. Conversion to self feeding should begin gradually, the new puppy is used to competition from litter mates, for his food and will over eat if allowed to.

A word of caution — some puppies and dogs may over-eat and become obese, but most animals adjust well and will eat the correct amount needed for appropriate weight gain and growth; especially when this system is begun as soon as a pup is old enough to chew dry foods easily, rather than long after his feeding habits have become well established.

Partial self feeding is an alternate plan; the pup is fed one or two regular feedings of dry food supplemented with a small amount of more palatable canned food with dry food being left free between meals.

BONES
 All bones are potentially dangerous for your dog. The sharp splinters may lodge in the throat or intestine causing obstruction or serious constipation, resulting in a painful experience for your dog, added work for your veterinarian, and unnecessary expense for you.

For this reason I suggest feeding dog biscuits to exercise the gums and prevent harmful dental tartar from forming. If your dog refuses dog biscuits, I suggest large knuckle bones from your butcher to serve the same purpose. However, be absolutely certain the dog is not splintering these. Rawhide chew sticks are not recommended, they serve no value and I have found they frequently cause mild gastrointestinal upsets.

Dry dog food may require supplementation with unsaturated fatty acids. This is usually sprayed on the pellets after cooking but quantities may be insufficient. The addition of ¼ teaspoon of vegetable oil per cupful of dry meal is a idea and may be beneficial to the animal's skin and haircoat. Do not feed raw eggs as many older books recommend.

Avidin in the egg interferes with Biotin (a B vitamin) absorption.

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TOWN OF WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE NOTICE RE: MEETINGS

The following regular meetings of Council have been cancelled:

December 21st, 1982 - Council acting as Planning Board
 December 28th, 1982 - Council

NOTE: The Municipal Offices will be closed as follows:

Monday, December 27th, 1982
 Tuesday, December 28th, 1982
 Monday, January 3rd, 1983

Mrs. P. Muir, A.M.C.T. Clerk.