



# Puppy Newsletter

## Diet

The chances are you have already decided or been advised what to feed your puppy from his or her breeder. There are many different opinions and variations on how puppies should be fed and countless brands and kinds of pet foods in the shops -the choice can sometimes be bewildering! In this newsletter we hope to answer some of the most commonly asked questions and dispel some myths regarding feeding your dog.

### Q How much food should I feed my puppy?

Many puppies will regulate their own food intake and as long as food is supplied in regular small amounts, they will take the amount they need and leave what they don't need. Some puppies (particularly small breeds) can sometimes be a little picky with food so do not be alarmed if their food intake varies from day to day, but if a puppy stops eating altogether or becomes unwell then you should contact your vet straight away. Other puppies (particularly some larger breeds) may be very food orientated and eat everything put in front of them. It is important to establish a routine with regular feeding times and not feeding too much at once. Eating too much too quickly can cause digestive pain and problems. We advise weighing your dog regularly and following the feeding guide on the packet of food that you have chosen. Sometimes the feeding guides may seem over generous in the amount they advise to feed. Different puppies will vary in their requirements and growth rates so don't be worried if your pet is not eating quite as much as the company advises, provided they are growing well. If your puppy needs extra food it is better to feed an extra meal rather than increasing the portion size.



### Q How often should I be feeding my puppy?

Some owners may decide to feed "ad lib". This involves leaving food down all the time for their puppy to eat small amounts whenever they want to. This can be convenient and can allow puppies to eat when they feel hungry rather than trying to eat a large meal all at once. However, this is really only safe and hygienic when feeding dry food which still needs to be changed daily. It can make establishing routine and training more difficult and there are some puppies who will eat far too much food if left to their own devices. In order

to establish routine, in most cases, we advise offering multiple small meals throughout the day (3-4 times for the first few months of your puppy's life—reducing to 2 meals from 4-6 months of age if appropriate). We don't advise feeding any fewer than two meals a day even in adult dogs and some may still need more frequent small meals. It is good practice to train your dog to sit and wait for you to give them their food. If a puppy does not eat at that time, it is better to take the food away and offer again

in 2-4 hours time. It is important not to feed your puppy immediately before or after exercise.

### Q How long should I keep my dog on puppy food?

Different manufacturers will advise different things and many now offer a follow-on or junior food to bridge the gap between puppy and adult diets. Different breeds of dog vary in age of reaching adulthood. In general terms, around the time when your puppy has stopped growing and reached sexual maturity (6-9 months), gradually transfer your dog to an adult food, or a junior food if one is available. If kept on puppy food long-term, dogs can have a tendency to gain excessive weight.



**Q Should what I decide to feed be affected by the breed of my puppy?**

Some diets are designed to cater for requirements or attempt to prevent problems common in a particular breed, for example dental problems in Yorkshire Terriers or skin problems in Westies. In many cases these have shown to be of benefit. Some foods will be designed with a particular breed in mind while others may be targeted at a specific area (eg dental/skin/joints/digestive system). One main consideration is kibble size as some small dogs can struggle to pick up and chew large chunks of dry food. Another important factor is joint care in large breed dogs prone to joint problems such as Labrador Retrievers and German Shepherd Dogs. There is evidence to suggest that rapid growth rates in large dogs can be a factor in the development of growth-related problems such as elbow dysplasia. Feeding a food designed for large breeds should reduce the risk of excessive growth and weight gain at an early age.

**Q Is wet or dry food better for my dog?**

It doesn't really matter provided you are feeding a good quality complete food, but dry food has the added dental benefit. Some owners will feed a combination of both.

**Q Why does the price of dog food vary so much—is expensive food any better?**

Firstly, all pet foods sold in the UK are composed of high quality ingredients. However, the composition and nutritional value will vary from food to food. Some foods may contain more food of low nutritional value and therefore more food will need to be fed. For some dogs this is not a problem but for others this can result in larger volumes of softer stools. Although many of the premium brands seem much more expensive, they usually have a higher nutritional value so much less is given to meet your pet's daily requirements. Another important variation between dog foods is their ingredient composition. Any food can state "rich in chicken" or "hypoallergenic" but may have many other unspecified and variable protein sources which may feature as "protein of animal derivative". The best foods will be clear in what is in them and can help you avoid ingredients that your pet may be sensitive/intolerant to. It is always best to



try to choose a diet which is as natural and uncomplicated as possible, trying to avoid high levels of additives, preservatives and salt.

**Q Does my dog need extra supplements or protein in his or her diet?**

If your puppy is fed a good quality complete puppy food then extra supplements or human food are not needed in his or her diet. Some breeders will advise feeding extra things including cereals, milk, raw meats and vitamins but these are not needed to rear a healthy puppy and additional vitamins can be harmful.

**Q Can my pet get bored of what I'm feeding him/her?**

Most dogs are happy to be fed the same thing every day. Chopping and changing their diet can sometimes cause tummy upsets as their intestines need time to gradually adapt to new foods. Care must be taken not to teach your dog that leaving one kind of food leads to them receiving something better!!

**Q What about preparing my own food for my dog?**

There are some animal owners, breeders and vets who believe that there are health benefits in giving their dogs a diet of fresh, raw meat; trying to mimic the kind of diet a wild dog would consume in the wild. There is limited evidence comparing the two feeding methods and the potential complications of getting it

wrong can be serious and can cause severe long term health problems. We therefore, cannot advise feeding a long term raw or home cooked diet, particularly in a growing animal, although for short periods or as part of a balanced complete diet, feeding freshly cooked chicken/fish

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