



Cottonwood Veterinary Center, P.C. Simple Nutrition Guidelines For Your Dog

Choosing the right Food!

Choosing the right dog food can be very difficult. There are a huge variety of choices available, all with different nutritional claims. The manufacturing of pet foods is a huge industry in the United States. Each pet food company and dog expert seems to have a different opinion about what the best food is for your dog. Here are a few things to consider when shopping for dog food:

- 1) **Avoid generic and store brands!** When it comes to pet food brands in most cases you do get what you pay for! In general, using cheap, poor quality ingredients produces lower-cost dog food. Foods advertised as low cost are not necessarily economical or nutritious.
- 2) Evaluate your dog's weight, body condition, life stage, and overall health and choose a diet best suited for your pet's needs. Your veterinarian can help you with this evaluation.

How much should you feed your dog?

Because there is such a wide variety of pet foods as well as pet lifestyles, it is very difficult to say exactly how much your dog should eat. A good starting point is to look at the back of the bag keeping in mind that most pet food companies tend to over estimate the amount of food to feed. Starting with the bag recommendations for your pet's ideal weight and then adjusting amount based on your pet's response to the food (ie. weight gain or loss) is the best way to calculate an amount for your dog.

How often should you feed your dog?

Because most dogs have a tendency to eat too much food if given the opportunity, we generally recommend feeding dogs at least two or three measured meals a day. **When measuring meals be sure to remember a 'cup' means an 8 ounce cup!**

What not to feed your dog!

- 1) **People food!** In general it is best to avoid the habit of feeding your dog the food you eat. Feeding people food adds excess calories to our pets' diets that can easily lead to obesity and other health problems. Another reason not to feed people food is that some dogs are very sensitive to dietary changes and even a small treat can lead to vomiting and/or diarrhea. Foods high in fat have been linked to serious conditions such as pancreatitis in dogs.
- 2) **Chocolate!** Theobromine and caffeine are the two ingredients found in chocolate that are highly toxic to dogs.
- 3) **Grapes and raisins** can lead to kidney failure.
- 4) **Onions and Garlic** can lead to breakdown of red blood cells.
- 5) **Xylitol!** The common ingredient in sugar free gum and candy may be safe for us but can cause life threatening low blood sugar and liver failure if fed to dogs.

What about treats!

Treats are a wonderful way to interact with your dog. Treats can be used as rewards for good behavior, training or just because. Here are some things to consider about treats. Most treats are high in calories and fat content so over doing it can make your pet gain unwanted weight. Many treats have a high salt content and therefore may not be appropriate for dogs that have been diagnosed with heart or kidney disease. Saving a portion of your dog's daily food allowance is a good way to offer treats without giving extra daily calories (Remember most dog's are not that smart when it comes to food!)

What about rawhides or Greenies®!

In general rawhides and Greenies® are highly digestible and safe as long as they are chewed into small enough pieces before swallowed. If your dog readily swallows large pieces of rawhide or Greenies®, these may not be the best treats for your dog because they may lodge in the intestine. If you give your dog large rawhide bones, it is a to take away pieces that are small enough to be swallowed but still big enough to potentially cause a problem.