



DOG CARE



Nutrition

A well balanced diet is essential for healthy growth and development in our pets. Nutrition helps keeps our pets fit and healthy and reduces the risk of diseases such as skin, complaints, stomach disorders, dental disease and weight problems.

The right balance of nutrients is determined on age, breed, physical condition and lifestyle of your pet.

At the Animal Aid Vet Clinic we stock a fantastic range of premium pet foods to suit all your pet's needs. Come in and speak to our trained staff about the nutritional needs for your pet.

You should maintain a nutritionally balanced diet for your dog, and when you go to the supermarket, pet shop, vet clinic or butcher you will be faced with many choices including:

Dry or Tinned Food?

Specially formulated dry foods are one of the most economical forms of feeding. They come in a wide range of formulations including puppy, adult, senior and low fat, in addition to formulas designed for specific medical conditions and individual breeds.



While tinned foods also come in complete and balanced formulations to suit a wide range of stages in your dog/pup's life we don't recommend feeding it as your dog/pup's sole diet. Tinned food is not good for keeping your pet's teeth clean and when fed in large quantities can also cause diarrhoea. We recommend that you use tinned food sparingly if at all. Pups which are fed commercial puppy food (tinned or dry) will not need additional calcium or vitamins!

Always try to get the best quality food you can afford. Cheaper supermarket brands tend to be full of artificial colours and flavours which should be avoided where possible. Stick to the premium brand dry foods available at pet shops and vet clinics such as Eagle Pack, Iams, Eukanuba, and Hill's Science Diet, or better quality supermarket brands such as Optimum or Purina.

Home-made diets

Homemade diets should be approved by a Vet in order to avoid health problems which may result from a poorly-balanced diet that is deficient in vital nutrients.

Meat is an important source of protein, but on its own doesn't create a complete and balanced diet, being deficient in calcium which is required for healthy bone development.

Cooked or raw vegetables can be an adequate dietary supplement but are completely unnecessary if a good quality dry food is fed. Some vegetables, such as onion and garlic are toxic to dogs and should be avoided, as they can cause breakdown of red blood cells and anemia.

Milk

Milk is unnecessary for your dog or puppy, and cow's milk can cause stomach upsets and diarrhoea. If you want to give milk, choose the lactose free varieties such as soy or pet milk (available in the pet food aisle of the supermarket) and feed in small quantities.

Cereals

Cereals are unnecessary as a breakfast item for puppies, and whilst they do provide carbohydrates they are deficient in many other essential nutrients. It is more beneficial to simply provide your puppy with a complete and balanced puppy food.

Bones

Bones help to clean teeth and gums. The best bones are the large, whole marrow bones and raw chicken wings, while chicken necks are good for pups and smaller dogs. Small breed dogs are predisposed to developing dental disease and it is very important to feed bones and dry food regularly to prevent this.

Your veterinarian will examine your dog's teeth at each yearly check-up and vaccination, and if they are dirty, your dog may require an anesthetic to clean them. It is better to start an early prevention program to keep the teeth clean.

Regular bones and dry food are an excellent way of maintaining dental health, but occasionally dogs may need dry food which is specifically formulated to keep the teeth clean. These foods contain additives which inhibit plaque deposition on teeth and the kibble size and consistency is such that dogs are able to sink their teeth into each piece before it breaks, allowing a mechanical cleaning component as well.

Refer to your vet for further advice regarding the most suitable type and frequency of bone for your dog. Please be aware that if you have other dogs or children, bones should only be given under strict supervision.

Water

Clean, fresh water should be available at all times for your dog or puppy. It is important to remember that your dog may tip over the bowl and so multiple water sources should be available. Ideally a solid heavy bucket or ceramic container which is hard for your dog to tip over and which can hold a large volume of water is best. Remember that your dog will drink more in hot weather so check the water supply regularly.



Frequency of meals

Puppies have small stomachs and therefore need to be fed small meals frequently. Any changes to the diet need to be implemented gradually to avoid problems such as diarrhoea.

The frequency of feeding varies with the breed and age but as a general rule:

- 🐾 6 weeks – 4 months = 3-4 meals per day
- 🐾 4 months – 12 months = 2 meals per day
- 🐾 Over 12 months = 1 or 2 meals per day



We recommend feeding adult dogs two smaller meals per day rather than one large meal. In deep-chested dogs like Dobermans, Great Danes etc., we recommend feeding twice daily to avoid the condition called Bloat or Gastric dilation & Volvulus. Bloat is a syndrome where the dog's stomach swells and can actually twist, and usually occurs due to large volumes of gas or food in the stomach.

Risk factors for this condition include the breed of dog (generally large deep-chested dogs, but all dogs and even cats can be affected), eating a large volume of food (especially when combined with exercise), swallowing a lot of air during eating, or even stress and/or hyper-excitability.

Early signs of bloat include restlessness, swollen abdomen, attempts to vomit (often yielding small amounts of frothy white material), pain, pale gums, and wobbly hind legs and eventually collapse. These signs are caused by the distended stomach putting pressure on major blood vessels which supply the rear end of the animal.

Bloat is an emergency and can lead to death if left untreated.

Treatment usually involves deflation of the stomach (by passing a tube through the esophagus and into the stomach to allow drainage of abdominal contents) and by surgery if the stomach has twisted. Owners of dogs which are at risk of this condition should attempt to familiarize themselves with the early signs and also with the following preventative measures:

- Feeding two small meals daily (rather than one large one)
- Encouraging their dog to eat slowly and not gulp their food
- Never exercising dogs after a meal
- Not feeding their dog straight after exercise
- Keeping their dog calm around feeding time
- Raise the food bowl off the ground



Quantity

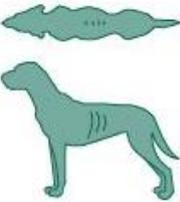
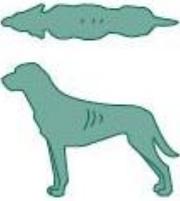
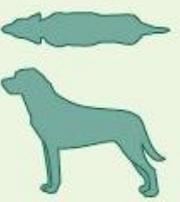
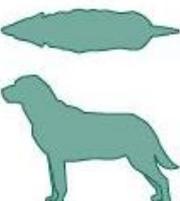
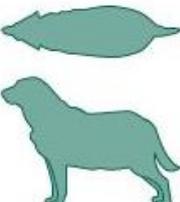
Pups and dogs should be fed according to the feeding guide on the food you use, but sometimes this can be too little, or more frequently too much for some adult dogs.

You should judge how much is right for your dog by the condition they are in. If you are feeding a set amount of food and your dog gains or loses weight, you can adjust the quantity you feed appropriately.

To assist you in identifying when your dog is in the ideal weight range, you can compare with the body condition score system (applicable to adult dogs only) provided below.

Most commercial foods come with a feeding guide, but the amount needed will vary between individual dogs.

CANINE BODY CONDITION SCORE CHART

TOO THIN	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Ribs, spine and pelvic bones are easily visible 1 Obvious loss of muscle mass 1 Ribs can be easily felt
	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Ribs, spine, pelvic bones and lumbar vertebrae obvious with minimal muscle mass 2 Pronounced abdominal tuck 2 No palpable fat
	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Ribs, spine and pelvic bones visible 3 Obvious waist 3 Minimal abdominal fat/ribs can be felt easily
	4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Ribs and spine are palpable with minimal fat covering 4 Obvious waist 4 Abdominal fat is minimal
IDEAL	5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Well proportioned 5 Ribs, spine and pelvic bones not visible but easily felt 5 Obvious waist line 5 Obvious abdominal tuck
TOO HEAVY	6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Ribs, spine and pelvic bones not easily felt 6 Waist and abdominal fat pad is distinguishable but not obvious 6 Obvious fat deposits covering the spine, chest and base of tail
	7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Ribs, spine and pelvic bones not easily felt due to moderate fat covering 7 Waist is diminished 7 Rounding of abdomen with moderate abdominal fat pad
	8		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Ribs, spine and pelvic bones are not easily felt with excess fat covering 8 Waist not visible due to excess fat 8 Obvious rounding of abdomen with excessive fat pad and fat deposits on the base of tail
	9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 Massive fat deposits on chest, spine and at the base of tail 9 Extensive abdominal fat 9 Heavy fat deposits over face and limbs