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RAW MEATY BONES

Quality, Quantity and Frequency

The following is an excerpt from the book "Work Wonders: Feed Your Dog Raw Meaty Bones," written by Tom Lonsdale and reprinted with permission

Let's take a look at the features of a healthy diet. The quality, quantity and frequency of feeding necessary to maintain our dogs in top condition and minimize trips to the vet. Before we begin, let's focus on three key aspects. If we get these things right, the rest should fall into place.

First, do no harm said the early physicians and so it is when feeding dogs. Stop feeding processed grain-based junk foods and already, we are halfway to solving the problems of bad nutrition. Benefits are often immediate and lifelong. Resist the urge to provide a bowl of kibble in case your dog gets hungry. Good health matters more.

Second, Nature is tolerant, perhaps too tolerant, and permits a range of feeding options. So, when we talk about quality, quantity and frequency of feeding, we don't have to be exact. Variations can occur and still provide a satisfactory outcome.

Third, if you are a beginner, you may worry about reading ideas written on paper and then converting those ideas into practical action. This is where a coach/mentor comes in handy. Do you have a friend or relative experienced in feeding raw food? Does your vet support raw feeding? Some of the best





sources of help and encouragement can be found on the internet raw feeding discussion lists. List moderators and experienced raw-feeders provide guidance for newcomers, leavened with patience and spiced with humor. It's free and it's fun.

QUALITY

Carcasses

Our dogs, modified wolves, deserve the best available: whole carcasses of other animals. Carcasses likely have the entrails still intact and the fur, feathers and scales just as Nature intended. Wolves and wild dogs, when free to choose, distinguish between what's good and what's not good to eat. Wolves may eat berries and ripe, fallen fruit when in season. However, for free living wolves and wild dogs, vegetable matter forms a minor part of the diet. Completing the picture of what wolves and wild dogs consider to be 'quality' food, we should note they eat the feces of their prey and, since their dining table is often bare earth, they ingest soil and debris adhering to the fresh carcass.

So, the big question: What are you going to do? Following Nature's model is easily the best option. Table 1 contains several carcass options suitable for dogs but, as mentioned, Nature is flexible and forgiving. Fortunately, the second-best option, raw meaty bones and table scraps, provides good health, good value and convenience.

TABLE 1: CARCASSES

Carcasses suitable for small dogs

Rats, mice, rabbits, fish, chickens/hens, quail, day-old chicks

Carcasses suitable for large dogs

Rabbits, chickens/hens, fish, calves, goats, pigs, kangaroos, lambs

Raw meaty bones

A diet of predominantly raw meaty bones and a few leftover table scraps provides a tried, tested

and successful method of feeding dogs. Numerous dog owners and increasing numbers of veterinarians attest to the ease, economy and efficiency of such a diet.

Key Principles

- Feed meaty bones raw.
- Feed meaty bones in large pieces to ensure maximum cleaning of teeth and gums.
- Feed meaty bones from a variety of animals, thus ensuring a good balance of nutrients.

Please keep these principles in mind, but at the same time practical considerations and availability of supplies may influence your decisions.



**TABLE 2:
RAW MEATY BONES**

Chicken and turkey backs and frames after the meat has been removed for human consumption is suitable for all dogs

Poultry heads, feet, necks and wings are suitable for very small dogs only

Whole fish and fish heads

Goat, sheep, calf, deer and kangaroo carcasses can be sawn into large pieces of meat and bone

Other by-products include: pig trotters, pig heads, sheep heads, brisket, tail bones and rib bones

Raw meaty chicken and turkey bones

Chicken backs and frames can be fed to large-breed dogs, but at least three days each week, I recommend that you feed larger, raw, meaty bones, thus ensuring adequate teeth cleaning. Turkey necks, wings, backs and frames are suitable for most dogs. Do not feed chicken necks and wings to larger dogs. They tend to swallow the pieces whole with the possible risk of blockage.

Sides of lamb, slabs of beef

If you have several dogs, it may be possible to feed them commu-

nally on sides of lamb, slabs of beef or similar. In Britain, foxhounds are customarily fed as a pack. Puppies of all breeds start out life sharing their meals with litter mates. Please exercise care if you anticipate any uncontrolled aggression.

For individual dogs, feeding several days' supply of food as one large piece, say a shoulder of lamb, works well. Each day, after your dog has eaten his share, return the meat and bone to the refrigerator. Sharp canine teeth raking and scything through slabs of meat gain maximum cleaning. Eventually, after a few days, when only the heaviest bones remain, the premolar and molar teeth get a thorough workout too.

Pork neck and ox brisket bones

Dogs gain lots of pleasure gnawing on relatively soft, edible pork neck and ox brisket bones. Trouble is, the proportion of meat relative to the amount of bone makes for firm feces, even constipation. Bones with little or no meat should not form a major part of a dog's diet.

Offal

Offal refers to any of the internal organs: intestines, tripe (the wall of the rumen of cattle, sheep and other ruminants) liver, pancreas, spleen, kidneys, heart and lungs. All items provide nutrition of good quality, when fed raw and in big pieces.

Feed liver as a whole meal once every two weeks but take care. Animals develop a taste for liver and if fed in excess, on a regular basis, it can create vitamin A excess. (Dried liver training treats are safe for use at any time.) Pancreas contains a rich supply of digestive enzymes and is especially good for dogs suffering pancreatic insufficiency.

TABLE 3: OFFAL

Offal suitable for dogs of all sizes

Liver, lungs, trachea, hearts, omasums (stomach of ruminants), tripe, tongues, pancreas, spleen

Table scraps

Pigs, bears and humans eat a range of plant and animal foods and are classified as omnivores. Sometimes carnivores eat omnivores, including the food in the omnivore's intestines. For this reason, feel free to feed your dog leftover table scraps, omnivore food, straight from the plate.

There are a few exceptions, but in general, what's good for you is okay and may be beneficial for your dog. Vegetables may need to be puréed or cooked to make them palatable. This applies to the outer leaves of cabbage and other vegetable peelings. Let common sense be your guide.

What is inedible for you is most likely inedible for your dog, so don't



feed melon rind, outer leaves of artichokes and orange peel. The occasional feeding of a few spoonfuls of boiled rice, leftover ice cream or a slice of sponge cake should be okay, but starchy, sugary foods should not be fed in large quantity.

Cooked bones should not be fed to your dog.

Supplements

Sick and elderly dogs may benefit from some dietary items added as supplements. Healthy dogs fed a healthy diet do not need supplements. Your veterinarian can advise. Ripe raw fruit, not strictly a supplement, is enjoyed by many dogs. Antioxidants and micronutrients in the fruit may be of value and appear to do no harm.

QUANTITY

Proportions of raw meaty bones, offal and scraps

Beginners ask how much to feed. Experienced raw feeders don't think about it; their dogs trained them well. When feeding raw meaty bones as the basis of a diet, we need to make an informed assessment of the proportion of meaty

bones to feed.

As a reasonable rule of thumb for feeding your dog, I suggest you supply 70% of the diet as raw, meaty bones. Feed the daily ration in large pieces and, within reason, it doesn't seem to matter what else makes up the balance of the diet.

Meat, bone and skin make up about 78% of the weight of a deer carcass. Some people can obtain green tripe, heart, lung, ox cheek, tongue, etc., and feed these items to make up the other 22% of the 'deer prey-model'. Others who have access to a ready supply of sheep and cattle omasums (fore-stomach) feed those in large quantity with only the occasional meaty bone. For adult dogs this is a cheap and satisfactory way of feeding.

Most people can obtain ox, lamb or pig's liver. Liver contains high quality proteins, fat, enzymes and vitamins. A large meal of liver every two weeks provides a useful addition to a raw meaty bones and table scraps diet.

If it is not possible to access offal, feeding raw meaty bones, even up to 100% of the diet, promotes health with few if any problems. Quantities

of table scraps fed vary enormously. Some people feed few if any table scraps; others purée fresh vegetables and serve regular amounts of ripe fruit. But the governing factor ensuring the health of dogs appears to be the basis of the diet: raw meaty bones.

Daily rations

No doubt, there are nutritionists in laboratories and universities who can tell you the daily food requirements for people of all ages and sizes. The same applies for our dogs. If your dog carries excess weight, you need to feed less and if he is on the thin side, you may need to feed more.

Viewed from above, does your dog have a satisfactory indent at the waistline or is there a bulge? In short-coated breeds look for a faint outline of the ribs. No outline means too fat; like a washboard means your dog needs extra food. If your dog has a thicker coat, try running your fingers over his ribs. Do the ribs ripple under your fingers? Check your own ribs for comparison. What's the verdict? – Too thin, too fat or just right?



Other factors help in determining how much to feed:

Is your dog:

- Big or small?
- Lively?
- Eager for food?

Does your dog:

- Quickly consume food or leave some uneaten?
- Bury bones in the backyard? (a sign of overfeeding)

Like us, our dogs' appetites vary between individuals and individual appetites vary from day to day. And of course, hard-working dogs, pregnant and nursing mothers need more food than the average. As a guide, the raw meaty bones average need of small dogs tends to be about 3% of their own body weight daily or 21% of body weight spread over a week. Supplementary table scraps may contribute extra. So, in round terms, a 10-pound dog consumes about two pounds of food each week. Fortunately, most big dogs need less food, even as low as 1% of their body weight daily or 7% weekly.

FREQUENCY

Adult dogs

For adult dogs, I recommend feeding once daily. Feeding on the

bare earth outside is best. Some people prefer to confine their dogs to crates to ensure no stealing or fighting. Forget about bowls. Carcasses or raw meaty bones will soon be dragged to a comfortable spot—another reason why bedrooms have doors.

Growing puppies

Puppies fed raw food from an early age seldom overeat. From three weeks of age, they can be provided with a constant supply of raw food and water, thus permitting the puppies to choose when to eat, when to drink, when to rest and when to play.

If your puppy tends to become too fat or for management reasons you don't want raw meat lying around, then feed three meals per day up to four months of age. From four months of age, meals can be provided two times per day. Between six and 12 months of age, depending on size and maturity of your puppy, meals can be reduced to once daily.

Temperature

In temperate and warm climates, food can be fed direct from the refrigerator or freezer—it soon thaws or can be eaten frozen, like ice cream.

Fasting

Carnivores tend to regulate their own food intake. Even if raw carcasses or raw meaty bones are constantly available, many dogs do not overeat. In the wild fasting between hunts is normal and research evidence suggests that fasting confers health benefits. Well fed, healthy dogs can be fasted one or two days each week. Except under veterinary supervision, elderly and sick dogs and young puppies should not be fasted.

In the next issue, we'll discuss resources for raw feeding options.

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Tom Lonsdale graduated from the Royal Veterinary College, University of London in 1972. After a period as a volunteer in Kenya and work in farm, zoo and small animal veterinary practices, he opened his own group of clinics in Sidney, Australia. He admits he was slow to recognize the diet and dental disease connection affecting his patients. In 1991, he gained recognition as the Whistleblower Vet, championing a raw meaty bones diet for dogs and cats. In 1993, the University of Sidney commissioned him to write the definitive article, "Preventative Dentistry" and in 2018, he commissioned the paper, "Raw Meaty Bones Essentials." His three books in the Raw Meaty Bones Trilogy are available at Amazon in paperback, e-Book and audiobook.