

Feeding

A fluffy white puppy is sitting on a white and red digital scale. The puppy is looking down and to the left. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall with vertical wood paneling. The floor is light-colored wood.

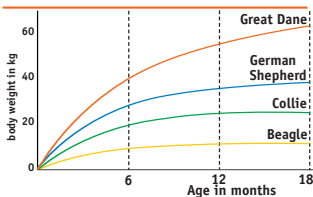
Food plays a vital role in our health and in that of our pets. To have a happy, healthy dog, correct food needs to be provided from the earliest age.

Each element in the feed has its own role to play. Canine nutritional science has made great advances in recent years. Commercial foods are now available to supply perfectly balanced diets for puppies through to old age.

● Feeding ●

A puppy's nutritional requirements varies with its size. Puppies can be seen to put on weight very quickly at first, this then slows down at between 4 and 6 months, (4 months for small dogs and 6 months for large ones).

As with many things, both excess and deficiency can be harmful. A puppy that is too fat is liable to be obese later on, being overweight also predisposes to bone and joint disorders in large-framed animals. Hence the importance of weighing your puppy regularly, to check that growth is proceeding smoothly.



Source : Lewis Morris Hand 1987

- A dog's nutritional needs depend on its physiological status (growing or adults, pregnant or nursing) and sexual status (whether neutered or not). Ready-made foods meet these 'life-stage' specifications, whether it is tins or biscuits.
- Dogs require a diet made up of proteins, carbohydrates (sugars), lipids (fats), vitamins and minerals. Proteins make up the framework of body tissues, carbohydrates and lipids supply energy. Puppies have higher protein demands for growth of body tissues, and higher fat requirements for energy, than adult dogs.
- As your puppy develops into an adult, nutritional requirements will alter from 'puppy' to 'maintenance' rations. Sedentary or spayed dogs may tend to become obese on maintenance diets, so specific 'light' diets have been developed. Your vet can help you with advice for your dog.

Commercial or Home-Made Food?

It is true that we have the choice between two ways of feeding our dogs: home-made or commercial diets. Reputable dog food manufacturers nowadays base their products on scientifically proven standards for the composition of their diets.



Commercial Diets Wet or Dry Rations?



● *Dog food manufacturers provide puppies with product-ranges adapted to size.*

These are perfectly balanced complete diets, which means that nothing extra is needed. The choice then is between dry rations (biscuits) or wet (tins). The former is often more practical and cheaper. Whichever you choose, you must make sure that your puppy always has fresh water available.

Home-Cooking!

There are those who remain unconvinced of the advantages of commercially prepared food and prefer to make their animal's meals themselves.

The essential proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, vitamins and minerals must all be included in the correct quantities; your vet will be able to advise.

Beware; unintended mistakes in making up home-made rations can sometimes cause serious problems.



The choice of commercial food is based on an idea of quality: Vets supply “premium” and “super-premium” food.

● These high quality products may sometimes be a bit more expensive than other ranges, but the outcome in terms of your dog's health and coat condition are striking. The price difference is mainly due to the quality of the raw materials used, especially proteins. Moreover, these products are very appetising, so that your puppy will be eager to eat.

Finally, certain owners wonder whether they should vary their animal's food.

The answer is: “No.”

● Dogs do not need variety and may quite happily eat one type of food all their lives. Not only that, but sudden changes in diet can cause digestive upsets. *The amount of food to be given is shown on the packaging. However, you should check your puppy's weight regularly and adjust the amount of food in line with the ideal weight as shown on the growth chart.*

Your vet is also knowledgeable

about nutrition, and can advise you on the ideal food for your puppy.

Meal-time routine

For most adult dogs, one meal a day is enough. Puppies generally start with 4 meals a day, these are gradually reduced over time.

Beware of treats!

Ideally, your puppy should only ever get his or her own meals. But it is sometimes hard not to give additional “treats”. If so, no sweets, “doggy treats” are better for your puppy. Also, your puppy should not be allowed to “beg” at the table; this is not only for nutritional reasons but also behavioural, sharing a meal is a sign of dominance in a dog pack.

Dogs should eat separately from their owners and never get food during meals.