

Let's Talk About Dog Food By MinPinMom

Have you ever wondered about what all this brouhaha is about dog food? The government agency that approves all pet foods sold has a handle on the “minimum daily requirements” needed for our pets to be healthy, right? How could all these dog foods be recalled for ingredients that kill our pets? Have you read the ingredients contained in your the pet food you feed your family member? Let's talk about those ingredients and how to recognize the “good” from the “bad” ingredients.

Dogs were once wild and roamed in packs. Those that are still wild (called dingos in some places) eat the meat of animals they either kill or find dead. The meat of these dead animals is the sole source of protein. The other ingredients in the wild dog packs diet come from stomach contents so there will be water, bones and depending on what kind of animal they are eating either vegetables and greens or fruits. There will be no corn, corn meal or other wheat grains and if there were, these partially digested stomach and intestine contents and would have less impact when eaten by dogs. Not only are corn and wheat less digestible for dogs, but also they are considered to be common allergens and while they are considered an acceptable source of carbohydrates, they are NOT an acceptable source of protein. In all the documentaries on wild dog packs, there doesn't seem to be one documenting dogs raiding corn or wheat fields.

The ingredients on a dry dog food label are listed in the order of the ingredient most contained in the dog food. So if chicken is listed first, that means that the dog food contains chicken as its most prevalent ingredient. If the first ingredient is chicken, it is purely chicken – human grade chicken not pieces parts that are NOT human quality food. Eighty percent of the nutrition of dry dog food is contained in the first six ingredients listed on the label. If corn meal, wheat or corn is listed in those six ingredients, it is purely inexpensive filler and carries no nutritional value. In fact, corn and corn meal are the main source of allergens contained in dog food for dogs. It goes straight through them landing in piles in our back yards for us to pick up.

By-products – beef, chicken, fish or any other source of protein are anything unfit for human consumption such as intestines, chicken feet and necks, heads, undeveloped eggs, generally anything other than meat approved for human consumption.¹ Lesser quality grains are considered to be a root cause of the increasing obesity that is skyrocketing today in the dog population. You can liken the lesser quality grains such as grain by products (i.e. corn meal gluten, brewers rice, cereal fines while less expensive for the food manufacturer (to bring down the cost of their products) to add to the dog food, they are also less nutritious. Depending on the quality of dog food fed to pets, one of the best supplements to give to aid in digestion of foods containing lower quality grain by-products is a digestive enzyme. The other most important supplement is essential fatty acids, especially fish oil. A holistic vet told me the best thing I could do for the rescue dogs is to give them a fish oil capsule daily. Once fish oil capsule daily will do wonders for dogs just as they do for us humans! My chiropractor asked me to pop one in my mouth while giving it to the rescue dogs!

The closer a dogs diet can come to what a wild dog would eat, the healthier they will be for a longer period of time. See the Spot's Chicken Stew recipe for a well balanced, easy to

¹ Only Natural Pet Store – dogs, cats holistic supplies products, item 7, p. 1-3.

make and freeze, nutritious food that will go a long way to making your dogs happy, healthy and possibly living a long life without all the additives in dog food which can not be pronounced but have been adding to the significantly increased incidence of aggressive cancers vets have been seeing in their practices.

Keeping any dog slim is very important but especially minpins because of their minpin pogo jump routine and those little patellas can't bear excess weight as they jump and bounce to get our attention or entertain us with their antics. Obesity in aging dogs contributes to diabetes; arthritis and urinary tract problems, which will significant, shorten their lives. Diabetes in dogs, contrary to humans, cannot be managed with diet and exercise. Once a dog has diabetes it will have diabetes for the rest of their shortened life. It is important to watch the minpin waistline and their food intake. Minpins will eat until the food is gone – they have NO sense of portion control!

Junk food for dogs – like junk food for humans, tastes good but does nothing for fuel for our bodies. As Ms. Brown mentions in her book *The Whole Pet Diet*, pay attention to what your dogs tell you when they are fed. Look at their energy level, they coat, their poop (it will tell you a lot about what is going on inside them) and the brightness in their eyes. Good people food can be good for dogs – in moderation. Remember that onions, raisins and grapes can be toxic without warning. Chicken, fish, beef, venison, bison, etc along with sweet potato, rice, veggies whole barley and oatmeal, are good for dogs. In fact steamed broccoli and dehydrated sweet potatoes are great treats my dogs and fosters do happy dances to get. Remember portion control – too much of any good thing is NOT good and will land on those little waistlines.

Variety is the spice of life for humans and dogs. If a well-balanced, nutritious diet were fed to dogs they would be able to eat a varied diet without digestive issues. In *Common Myths About Pet Food and Nutrition* published by Only Natural Pet Store, a discussion on changing your dogs diet often will prevent the development of allergies or sensitivity to the most commonly fed food or a specific ingredient. “Many holistic veterinarians believe that feeding the same food for many years is a contributing factor to the development of inflammatory bowel disease.”

One of the common digestive aids dogs love is yogurt. A teaspoon daily or a yogurt ice cream cube will not only aid in digestion, it will ensure that pesky ear infections are under control.

Biskit was plagued by severe ear infections, hair loss and not feeling very well his entire life. He and his mom Dorothy were at the vet every 3 months to have ears cleaned and get antibiotics and expensive special food in an attempt to try and control the ear infections and make his discomfort go away. After years of encouraging Dorothy to change not only dog food but also vets, she finally considered that option. Biskit and Dorothy went to a holistic vet. When Dorothy told the new vet it was strongly suggest she give yogurt daily and the vet said absolutely it would help with the ear infections. When Dorothy mentioned she had recently learned NOT to vaccinate Biskit when he was having an outbreak of nasty ear infections the vet said absolutely no vaccines until his immune system returned to healthy. When Dorothy mentioned she had recently changed to a raw diet the vet was extremely pleased and said Biskit probably was already on the way to being healthier due to the diet. Dorothy said Biskit and his rescue brother Kojak are new dogs. Personality issues have gone away, they have become more active and energetic and are much more loving and welcoming to new people in the home. No more ear

infections, no more hair loss, no more grouchy Biskit and no more quarterly \$600 vet bills for ear draining.

It is a lesson to manage the health care of our pets. Ask questions, research the medicines and the side effects they have. There is a lot of new information and vets practicing western medicine are more open to less invasive ways of treating their patients. Become a partner with your vet in managing the care of your beloved family member.

Become label readers. Know and understand what each ingredient is when you read the ingredient label on your pets dog food. Most vitamins, preservatives, veggies and fruits are nutritious for you and your dog. BHA/BHT is as toxic to you as it is for your dog – but it is a cheap preservative. “... there are many foods on the market that meet AAFCO standards that many cats and dogs cannot tolerate due to the grains and grain by-products used as protein sources.”²

² Only Natural Pet Store, item 9, paragraph 2.