

# Home Prepared Diets for Dogs & Cats

By Susan Moss, All The Best Pet Care

## Increase Your Companion's Health and Longevity

Incorporating fresh whole foods into your pet's diet will result in a longer, healthier life. Nature did not intend dogs and cats to sustain life on little brown pellets! Despite all we know about the importance of fresh foods for human nutrition, most people feed highly processed pet foods. These foods are cooked at high temperatures and designed to sit on a shelf for a year or more.

The rise of commercial pet foods in the last forty years has paralleled the sharp decline in the health and lifespan of dogs and cats. Most commercial pet foods have little real meat or vital fatty acids. They contain food industry leftovers, low-quality plant-based proteins from corn, soy and wheat, animal by-products, meat meals from diseased animals, cereal fillers, preservatives, and artificial ingredients. Premium foods have far better ingredients, like human grade meats, and use gentler cooking methods, but they, too, are missing much of the "liveness" of whole raw foods.

***MOST OF THE HEALTH PROBLEMS OF DOGS AND CATS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO POOR NUTRITION.***

Many veterinarians recommend home prepared pet food as a curative diet. Switching to fresh foods can clear up many chronic degenerative conditions including: arthritis, allergies, runny eyes, infected ears, fleas, weight problems, digestive problems, skin and coat problems, dental decay, feline urinary problems, and hairballs. When the body's nutritional needs are met, it is better able to heal and repair itself without further medical intervention.

## Carnivores Need Meat

Pet food companies have turned our companions into grain eaters because grains are a cheap, available food source. Dogs and cats were designed to digest meat. They need fresh meat, preferably raw, to supply the proper amino acids, enzymes, and other essential nutrients. The quality and quantity of meat protein in home-prepared diets is better than dry pet foods. Human quality, USDA approved meat should be a minimum standard for dogs and cats.

**Is Raw Meat Safe?** Dogs and cats are not generally affected by bacterial contaminations because they have highly acidic digestive juices and a shorter digestive cycle, which prevents harmful bacteria from establishing or growing. Dogs, particularly, evolved as scavengers and garbage eaters, consuming spoiled food and half-rotted carcasses that contained millions of bacteria. If an animal is severely immunocompromised, however, you can gently cook the meat portion of the food before mixing with the other ingredients. Add a pinch of digestive enzymes just before serving to compensate for the cooking.

## Raw Meaty Bones - Part Of A Healthy Diet

Dogs and cats evolved eating the bones of their prey, and raw bones are still the best source of calcium, phosphorus, and other minerals. Chewing on raw bones keeps teeth clean, flossed, and free of tartar, often eliminating the need for dental cleanings. Unlike cooked bones, which can splinter and cause problems, raw bones are pliable and break off safely.

For dogs, hard beef or buffalo bones supply recreation, exercise, and that great marrow in the middle. Remove bones after a day or so when stripped clean. They may be given often, even every day, but you will probably want to alternate them with more nutritious poultry bones.

Meaty poultry bones, like backs, necks, or wings, with the skin, meat, and other good stuff intact can be fed whole, hacked up with a cleaver, or ground up for both dogs and cats. Meaty chicken parts are probably the

best nutritional package available as a base for canine and feline diets. All The Best Pet Care carries affordable, easy to use, prepackaged ground chicken backs and ground turkey necks.

#### *WHOLE CHICKEN PARTS CONTAIN:*

- *BACKS AND NECKS: BONE FOR CALCIUM AND OTHER MINERALS*
- *SKIN AND FAT: CHICKEN IS A SUPERIOR SOURCE OF ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS*
- *MEAT: PROTEIN AND AMINO ACIDS*
- *BONE MARROW: BLOOD-FORMING ELEMENTS, COPPER, IRON, AND ZINC*
- *CARTILAGE AND GRISTLE: CONNECTIVE TISSUES CONTAIN GLUCOSAMINE, A NUTRIENT THAT PREVENTS ARTHRITIS*
- *ORGANS: KIDNEYS ATTACHED TO BACKBONE CONTRIBUTE PROTEIN, VITAMINS A, B, C, FATTY ACIDS, AND ZINC*

A typical dog might consume a turkey neck or a few chicken wings in place of a meal. For cats and small dogs, chicken or turkey necks should be hacked into smaller pieces, with an inch or two given at a time.

## **Calcium - An All-Important Mineral**

Failing to include sufficient calcium is one of the most overlooked issues in home prepared diets. Adding the bonemeal that the recipe calls for is **essential**. All The Best makes a high quality edible, human grade bonemeal supplement expressly for this purpose.

Two other options for including calcium include:

- using ground poultry parts with bone included (such as ROAR ground chicken backs and ROAR ground turkey necks) in place of meat in the recipe,
- feeding whole meaty bones such as turkey necks or chicken parts several times a week.

Dogs have high calcium requirements, especially in the growth stage. More is better than less, and excess bone material is passed out through the digestive system.

*Dogs:* 1 to 2 Tbs. bonemeal per pound of raw meat.

*Cats:* 1 Tbs. per pound of meat is sufficient.

## **Organ Meats**

Organs contain many nutrients not found in muscle meat: wild predators will eat the organs of their prey first. Since organs comprise 1/6 to 1/4 of a prey animal's body, try to use a similar proportion of liver, gizzard, heart, or other organs. Kidney and tripe are good but stinky. Mix a bit in each meal, or feed an organ meal once or twice a week.

## **Each Meal Does Not Have To Be Balanced**

Carnivores are by necessity opportunists, and in the wild their diets would vary widely in content, amount, and frequency. Unlike modern pet diets, each bite is not complete, identical, or balanced.

***AS LONG AS BALANCE IS ACHIEVED OVER A PERIOD OF WEEKS, EACH MEAL CAN VARY.***

Nature has made animals very adaptable and flexible in the face of an uncertain food supply, and the body can store most nutrients until needed.

## **Grains - A Variety of Opinions**

No aspect of natural feeding has had more difference of opinion than the topic of grains. Grains are optional - there is no minimum carbohydrate requirement for dogs or cats. Many animals are grain sensitive, leading to allergy symptoms and digestive problems, and would do better on a grain-free regimen. Some grain sensitivities, however, have been found to be caused by storage mites, similar to dust mites that contaminate grains kept in storage too long. Better pet foods are made with "human consumable" ingredients will not contain mite-infested grain. Even problem-free animals should not have too much grain -- less than 50% of a dog's diet, and only 10 to 25% of a cat's diet.

## Vegetables -- Antioxidant Superfoods

A big change in your animal's feeding regimen will be the addition of ground raw vegetables. You don't have to include them every day, but try to add them more often than not. They contribute a wealth of cleansing, healing, nourishing, living nutrients, part of nature's magic. Green vegetables and sprouts detoxify, cleanse, and enliven. Orange vegetables sweeten food and add cancer-fighting beta-carotene. Small amounts can create a powerful effect.

Almost any vegetable is okay in moderation except raw onions and raw white potatoes. Raw garlic is wonderful and very appealing to dogs, but not very appealing to cats. I use one clove per large dog per meal.

Grinding vegetables is the best way to release their goodness, as dogs and cats lack the enzyme, cellulase, to break down the cellulose cell walls on their own.

**The Short Cuts:** If you can't make fresh food yourself, here are some ready-made frozen meals:

- **“All The Best” Complete Meals for dogs** - Chicken & Vegetables and Turkey & Vegetables, with 75% free-range meat and 25% organic vegetables. Contains organs, ground bone, kelp and olive oil.
- **Amore-** Complete meals with free-range meats, organs, raw ground bone, organic vegetables and supplements. Dog varieties contain about 60% meat. Cat varieties have about 80% meat. Chicken, turkey, rabbit, ostrich, salmon, and quail varieties. Both canine and feline formulas. Cat formulas contain organic egg yolks and are extremely popular.
- **Mirabeau Ground Vegetables** - the ultimate convenience, a variety of ground frozen vegetables and fruits. Add to your home-prepared mixture, or to canned food, kibble, cottage cheese, canned fish, or any other use you can dream up.
- **Nature's Variety** - Convenient, complete, and natural. Each raw frozen diet is 95% meat and 5% fruits and vegetables. They contain meat, organs, raw ground bone, fruits, vegetables, seed sprouts, chelated trace minerals, honey, whole eggs, apple cider vinegar, cold pressed oils, and natural fruit and herbal extracts.
- **Pepperdogz & Peppercatz** - Canine meals from free range chicken or buffalo combined with ground organic vegetables and lots of good supplements. Feline meals from free range chicken or turkey with ground organic vegetable and lots of good supplements. These formulas were developed by Dr. Jackie Obando, a holistic veterinarian on Mercer Island.
- **RAW Advantage** – Highest quality, human grade organic ingredients. Complete meals for dogs and cats plus a variety of supplemental meats and bones.
- **R.O.A.R. “Human Quality Food for Animals”** - Lots of bones, both whole and ground. USDA beef knuckle and marrow bones, USDA buffalo bones, USDA ground and whole turkey necks, and USDA ground chicken backs.
- **Steve's Real Food for Pets** – Human quality ingredients. 100% hormone-free, human-edible raw beef, chicken and turkey for dogs. All varieties are mixed with pesticide free vegetables, vitamin E, sardines, anchovies and flaxseed oil.

## THE CLASSIC DOG RECIPE

*(daily fare for a 50 lb dog)*

### The Essentials

- 1 cup **Ground or chunked raw meat** (*beef, lamb, chicken, turkey, buffalo, ostrich etc...*)  
(1/2 lb) (*preferably with organ meats - 1/6 of total meat portion*)
- 1 - 2 T. **Edible human-grade bonemeal** (*calcium and mineral source - provides the "bone" for the meat*)
- 1/2 cup **Ground raw green & orange vegetables** (*choose several: carrot, sweet potato, squash, zucchini, broccoli, lettuce, kale, celery, parsley, alfalfa sprouts, etc*)
- ½ - 1 cup **Well-cooked grain** (*brown rice, white rice, oatmeal, millet, barley, bulgur, multi-grain cereal, or cooked mashed potato for grain-intolerant dogs*)

Use a food processor to finely grind all veggies together, or put through a juicer, and use both juice and pulp. Mix together all ingredients for a consistency like thick chili. Add pure water if too dry. If desired, mix cold meat and veggies into hot cooked grain to warm all ingredients and release great aroma. Don't get it too hot, or it will cook! Multiply quantities to make a big batch. Keep in fridge up to 3 days, or freeze in portions.

### Strongly Recommended (add just before serving):

- 1/2 to 1T Fatty Acid source for balanced omega-3s and 6s - Grizzly Salmon Oil, Udo's Essentials, Best Friend's Coat Supplement, Missing Link, or cod liver oil.
- 1/2 tsp. Digestive Enzymes - to replace enzymes needed for assimilation of nutrients that are lost in cooking or grinding
- 2 T Aloe Vera Juice concentrate for good digestion, skin, and joints
- 1/2 tsp. Kelp, seameal, alfalfa powder, or other trace mineral supplement
- 750 mg Vitamin C for arthritis, good hips, and general immune system support

### Other Supplements and Additives:

**General Purpose:** Nutritional yeast, raw or lightly cooked egg, yogurt, fresh or aged garlic

**Digestive Help:** Good Digestion (enzymes and probiotics) Aloe Vera Concentrate

**Skin Problems:** Udo's Choice Essentials, Best Friend's Coat Supplement, salmon or fish oil, or other coat supplement, in combination with enzymes to aid fatty acid absorption

**Multi-Purpose Vitamin/Mineral:** Vetline Vitamins, FidoNutrients

**Arthritis & Old Age:** K-9 Liquid Health, Super OxyGreen, Alfalfa Powder, Hip Health, or other glucosamine / chondroitin supplement.

**Fleas:** BodyGuard, a sulfur-containing supplement that improves skin condition and imparts a scent that fleas don't like.

## THE GRAIN-FREE DOG RECIPE

*Many holistic vets, such as Ian Billinghurst and Russell Swift, feel that dogs cannot digest grains well, and that grains are the cause of many chronic health problems. If your animals persist with skin problems, digestive problems, or are not doing well on raw food with grains, try a grainless diet. We've seen wonderful results both ways. The No-Grain Diet is similar to the Classic recipe, but omit grains. A little oat bran can be added for fiber - 1/8 to 1/4 cup blanched in hot water. Proportions of meat to vegetables should be 3 to 1.*

## THE CLASSIC CAT RECIPE

*(one day's fare for a large cat)*

### The Essentials

- 1/2 cup **Ground or chunked raw meat** (beef, lamb, chicken, turkey, ostrich, quail, etc.)  
*Preferably with organ meats – 1/6 of total meat portion.*
- 2 tsp. **Edible human-grade Bonemeal** (calcium source - provides the "bone" for the meat)
- 1/8 cup **Ground raw green and orange vegetables** (carrot, sweet potato, zucchini, parsley, broccoli etc)  
*or less*
- 1/8 cup **Well-cooked grain** (white rice, oatmeal, 8-grain cereal, millet, oat bran, brown rice only if it has been pre-ground to make it less rough)

*Optional: one raw egg yolk (enriches food for a cat's higher nutritional requirements)*

Use a food processor to finely grind all veggies together, or put through a juicer, and use both juice and pulp. Mix together all ingredients for a consistency like thick chili. Add pure water if too dry. Cats like their food warmed gently - set dish with food in warm water. Multiply quantities to make a batch. Keep in fridge up to 3 days, or freeze in portions.

### Strongly Recommended to Add (at time of serving):

- **Fatty Acid** source for balanced omega 3s and 6s - cats need an animal-based oil such as cod liver or salmon oil (pierce gel caps or use Grizzly Salmon Oil) or a mixture of plant and animal oils such as found in Animal Essentials Marine Lipids.
- **1/4 tsp. Digestive Enzymes** - to replace enzymes needed for assimilation of nutrients that are lost in cooking or grinding
- **1/2 tsp. Vetline Feline** - for many different important trace nutrients
- **Vitamin C** - for acidifying urinary tract and general immune system support

### Other Supplements and Additives:

**General Purpose:** Nutritional yeast, raw egg yolk, yogurt, aged garlic

**Urinary Health:** Enzymes pH (enzymes and urinary tract protectants & acidifiers)

**Digestive Help:** Good Digestion (enzymes and probiotics) Aloe Vera Concentrate

**Skin Problems:** MaxiDerm or salmon oil in combination with enzymes to aid fatty acid breakdown

**Multi-Purpose:** Vetline Feline, Missing Link for Cats

**Fleas:** BodyGuard, a supplement that improves skin quality and imparts a scent that fleas don't like.

**Arthritis/ Old Age:** Healthy Drops, a glucosamine supplement that reduces stiffness and soreness.

## THE GRAIN-FREE CAT RECIPE

*Cats are more true carnivores than dogs, and do not always digest grains adequately. The grain-free approach works well for them. One bonus is that meat protein is very acidifying to the urinary tract, making this the perfect preventative diet for F.U.S. Omit grains completely, or add 1 to 2 T. of oat bran blanched in hot water for a bit of fiber. Vegetables should be no more than 5% to 15% of mixture --they can be alkalizing to a cat's system, so do not use too much!*

## How Much to Feed:

For both dogs and cats, a good rule of thumb is to feed 2 - 3% of bodyweight per day.

There are approximately 2 cups to a pound of meat or other wet food.

- A 50 lb dog will eat one to one-and-one-half pounds of food, or 2 to 3 cups
- A cat will eat anywhere from 3 oz to 8 oz per day, averaging around 4 oz, or 1/2 cup.

To start out, serve a little more than you think they'll need, and remove the uneaten portion after 20 minutes or when they walk away. **Animals will not overeat on this type of diet!** Because it is not carbohydrate-laden or junk food, they will not be driven to eat more than their nutritional requirements dictate. It may take awhile for their natural feedback system to begin to regulate appetite correctly, but it will come. Until then, they may be compensating for long-standing deficiencies, so don't try to reduce overweight dogs or cats. Just let them eat.

## How to Introduce the New Diet

Slowly. A little at a time, mixed in with or alongside the regular food. This will avoid digestive upset and help your pet accept something new. After all, if a dog or cat has been eating processed food for a long time, the digestive system needs time to adjust.

## Using Bribe Foods to Switch Diets in Cats

Most cats are resistant to change, and we have discovered a few helpful techniques for switching them over.

- Tuna water, canned salmon, or a pinch of Kitty Caviar (shaved bonito flakes) added to the new food will increase acceptance.
- Try smearing your cat's favorite canned food over the top of her new food.
- Add the new food a teaspoon at a time to the old food until the switch is complete.

Stick with it though - most successes take about a month.

## What About Occasional Non-Meat Meals for Dogs?

Non-meat meals can offer a greater variety of foods.

- Cottage cheese or yogurt - alone or with ground vegetables
- Eggs - raw or lightly cooked
- Fish and veggies using canned salmon, sardines or tuna
- An occasional bowl of oatmeal with butter and a spoon of honey, or even potatoes.

Almost anything goes.... dogs are very adaptable!

## Recommended Reading:

[Give Your Dog a Bone](#), Ian Billinghurst DVM

[Natural Nutrition for Dogs and Cats: The Ultimate Diet](#), Kymythy Schultze

[Raw Dog Food: Make It Easy For You and Your Dog!](#), Carina Beth MacDonald

[See Spot Live Longer](#), Steve Brown & Beth Taylor

[Switching to Raw: A Fresh Food Diet That Makes Sense for Dogs](#), Susan K. Johnson

[The BARF Diet](#), Ian Billinghurst DVM

[The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat](#), Juliette de Bairacli Levy

[The New Natural Cat](#), Anitra Frazier

[The Whole Dog Journal](#)

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