

# Home Prepared Diets for Dogs & Cats

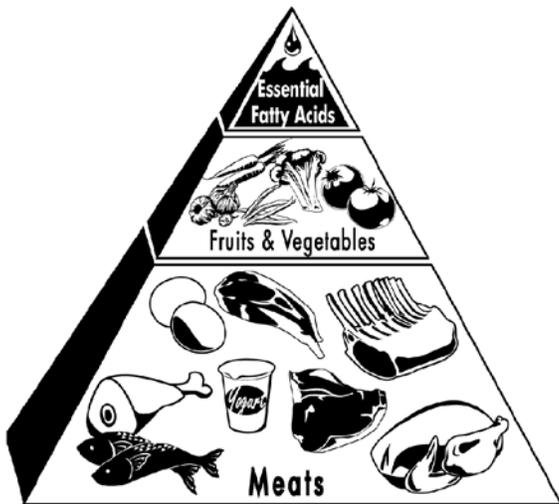
By Susan Moss, All The Best Pet Care

## Toward a Better Standard of Eating

Increase your companion's health and longevity by incorporating fresh whole foods into the daily diet. As with human nutrition, dogs and cats are healthiest when eating a wide variety of minimally processed foods. Unlike conventional pet foods with questionable ingredients cooked at high temperatures, food you prepare in your own kitchen will be brimming with all the enzymes, intact amino acids, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and other nutrients that Nature intended. Even though the top tier of high quality pet foods has vastly improved ingredients and cooking methods, fresh unadulterated food, high in moisture and preferably raw, offers the best nutrition. You will have complete transparency and control of what goes in your pet's bowl, and also what's left out.

## “Let Your Food Be Your Medicine” -- Hippocrates

Most of the health problems of dogs and cats can be attributed to poor nutrition, and some veterinarians suggest dietary upgrades to improve or eliminate common conditions -- arthritis, allergies, runny eyes, infected ears, fleas, worms, weight problems, digestive problems, skin and coat problems, dental decay, feline urinary problems and hairballs. When the body's nutritional needs are met, it will have the tools to heal and repair itself. A change of food can bring about miraculous improvements in unhealthy animals and even healthy ones will be glossier, peppier, and more radiant than before. Expect the most dramatic results in older animals; what we consider the effects of aging are often caused by a poor diet and can be reversed.



## Food Pyramid for a Carnivore

No grains required

### Ancestral Diet of Dogs:

- mostly meat and bone
- high in moisture
- low in carbohydrates
- about 50% protein, 20% fat
- predigested vegetation from stomach of prey

## Carnivores Need Meat

Dogs and cats were designed to digest animal flesh, and they do best on a meat-based diet. Dogs are omnivores with a carnivorous past, and fresh raw meat composed of muscle, fat, bone and connective tissue should make up a major part of the diet, along with vegetables and extras. Cats are obligate carnivores and they do best with a nearly all meat diet with only very small amounts of other components. “Meat” can encompass poultry, fish, organs and eggs, raw or lightly cooked – almost anything goes. One thing to avoid is raw Pacific salmon, which can contain a liver fluke that is lethal to dogs unless cooked, but does not affect cats. Any other cooked or raw fish is okay.

## **Safety of Raw Meat for Pets**

Dogs and cats are able to neutralize harmful bacteria with their strong stomach acids and short digestive transit time. Dogs, particularly, evolved as scavengers and carrion eaters, consuming spoiled food and half-rotted carcasses containing millions of bacteria. Cats prefer a “fresh kill” and will refuse contaminated or bad meat. If an animal is severely immuno-compromised, 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 enzymes lost during cooking.

## **Organ Meats**

Organs contain many nutrients not found in muscle meat, and wild predators will eat them first. Liver is the most valuable, but kidney, heart, gizzards and tripe are very good, too. Since organs comprise 1/6 to 1/4 of a prey animal’s body, try to use a similar proportion. Mix a bit in each meal, or feed an organ meal of beef or chicken liver once or twice a week, raw or lightly cooked.

## **Meal Replacement Bones**

An easy way to provide a species-appropriate diet is to feed “mono meals” of whole poultry parts, typically wings, backs or necks that can be digested completely. They are a great source of calcium, phosphorus and other minerals in the correct proportions. Unlike cooked bones, which can splinter and cause problems, raw bones are pliable and break off safely. 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.

For dogs, hard beef or buffalo marrow bones supply recreation, exercise and tasty marrow in the middle. Knuckle bones are a bit softer, with tendons, ligaments and cartilage which contain arthritis-reducing substances. Gnawing on raw bones keeps teeth clean and free of tartar, often eliminating the need for dental cleanings. Marrow bones are most popular and higher in fat content. Knuckles are recommended for seniors, puppies and overweight dogs. 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.

### **Whole chicken parts contain:**

- Backs and necks: bone for calcium and other minerals
- Skin and fat: a superior source of essential fatty acids
- Muscle meat: protein and amino acids
- Bone marrow: blood-forming elements, copper, iron, and zinc
- Cartilage and gristle: connective tissues contain glucosamine, which helps prevent arthritis
- Organs: kidneys attached to backs contribute protein, Vitamins A, B, C, fatty acids, and zinc

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

Dogs need twice as much calcium in their diet as humans or cats, and failing to include sufficient calcium is a concern in home prepared diets. The canine requirement will be met if feeding whole poultry parts five times a week, or if ground meat with bone is used as a base for the complete meals. Otherwise, when using ordinary muscle meat, add one to two tablespoons human edible bone meal per pound of meat, or a calcium supplement formulated for home prepared diets – Animal Essentials Natural Calcium or Wysong Call of the Wild.

## **Vegetables -- Antioxidant Super Foods**

A change in your animal's feeding regimen will be the addition of raw vegetables, mimicking the predigested stomach contents of wild prey. They contribute a wealth of cleansing, healing, nourishing and 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. Amounts used range from 5% to 25% of those meals containing veggies. Use too much, and your dog may reject his food, or have loose stools. Seniors and overweight dogs can benefit most from larger amounts. Cats need smaller amounts, and sometimes not at all.

Grinding vegetables in a food processor or pulping them in a juicer is the best way to release their nutrients, as dogs and cats lack the enzyme, cellulase, to break down the cellulose cell walls on their own. You can buy frozen ground vegetables or use a dehydrated mix meant for homemade pet food. Almost any vegetable are okay in moderation except raw onions and raw white potatoes. Fruits can be included. Apples and berries are most popular. Raw garlic, called Nature's antibiotic, is very appealing to dogs in small amounts, but not to cats. Use one clove per large dog per meal. Fresh ginger modulates blood sugar and is an anti-helminthic, helping to prevent and eliminate worms and other parasites from the digestive tract.

## **Balance Over Time, Not Each Day**

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. The body can store most nutrients until needed. It stores minerals in the skeletal system, and fat soluble vitamins in fat cells. As long as balance is achieved over a period of weeks, each meal can vary.

## **The Case for Grains**

Grains have been discredited as a food ingredient because the pet food industry has used them as cheap protein fillers. Glutens are vegetable proteins, most prevalent in corn and wheat, that are poorly utilized by dogs and cats. Some animals appear to be allergic to grains, although the real culprit can be the storage mites that contaminate poor quality grains used for pet food.

But grains, when fed with meat protein, can be a cost-effective source of calories and energy for large and medium size dogs. Use low gluten grains such as oatmeal, rice, millet, barley, or buckwheat. They should be well-cooked, even mushy, and make up less than 50% of the diet. Grains aren't recommended for overweight dogs, who need a low carbohydrate diet to drop excess pounds.

## **Supplements and "Extras"**

Supplementation is an inexpensive form of nutritional insurance, compensating for nutrients that might be missing from fresh food due to depleted soils. Kelp and seaweed contain every known trace mineral, which are known collectively as the "spark plugs" of metabolism. Add from a 1/8 teaspoon for a 10 lb. dog or cat up to one teaspoon for a dog 50 lbs. or more several times a week.

Essential fatty acid supplements have healing, cancer-fighting and anti-inflammatory properties. Flax, hemp and fish oil are superior sources for dogs. Cats need an animal-sourced essential fatty acid like fish oil because, unlike dogs and humans, they can't convert plant-based EFAs into arachidonic acid, an important fatty acid not found in plants.

## When to Feed, and How Much

Most home feeders serve a simple morning meal of meaty bones and a combination evening meal. They may mix veggies with canned fish, cottage cheese or eggs in place of meat for more variety. There are many ways to do it, and what makes sense for you and your pets may be different from someone else.

How much to feed is a difficult question because each animal has a different metabolism and activity level, and caloric requirements can vary by 20%. Begin by feeding the same number of cups as the current food even though the moisture levels differ, and adjust up or down according to your animal's weight management needs. Suggested daily quantities:

Tiny dog or cat	7 – 15 lb.	1/4 to 1/2 lb. food daily	OR	1/2 to 1 cup food daily
Small dog	16 – 25 lb.	1/2 to 3/4 lb. food daily	OR	1 to 1 1/2 cups food daily
Medium dog	26 – 50 lb.	3/4 to 1 1/4 lb. food daily	OR	1 1/4 to 2 cups food daily
Large dog	51 – 75 lb.	1 to 1 3/4 lb. food daily	OR	2 to 4 1/2 cups food daily
Very large dog	75 – 100 lb.	1 3/4 to 2 1/4 lb. food daily	OR	3 1/2 to 5 1/2 cups food daily

A puppy or kitten under six months may eat twice as much as an adult, and needs 2 or 3 meals a day.

## Transitioning and Detoxification for Dogs

Switching to the new diet can be done all at once, or you can gradually replace a greater part of the regular food each day, drawing the process out for four to ten days. Warning: if you've been feeding lower quality grocery store food, the switchover should be very gradual. The digestive system needs time to adapt, and there could be odd-looking stools or throwing up of bony pieces at first. This is to be expected and will go away soon. Offer small quantities of meal replacement bones and observe your pet's response. Keep some plain canned pumpkin on hand, and add a small quantity to meals to firm up stools if necessary. Adding digestive enzymes will also help the transition.

Detoxification is when the body begins to get rid of accumulated toxins. There may be foul or mucous-y stools, expelling of worms, or an accelerated shedding of coat or flaky skin as the body makes new coat and skin. These effects should be short-lived and resolve quickly.

## Transitioning Your Cat's Diet

High meat, high moisture, minimally processed diets are a godsend for cats, but the transition can be challenging. Kittens under 5 months will switch happily, but after that age a cat's food preferences are strongly imprinted and they are slow to accept new foods and textures.

Switching can take up to two months, one spoon at a time. First, eliminate free feeding and pick up the food bowl at night. Then, in the morning when your cat is hungriest, start with a bit on the end of your finger or a teaspoon mixed in with other food. She may take only one bite. Gradually increase new food and don't worry about adding supplements or vegetables until the transition is complete. Try mixing a strong flavor with the raw meat – canned tuna, salmon or a favorite canned food. Or press some shaved bonito flakes into the surface of the food. You will no doubt come up with your own bribes and tricks. With a very gradual change of food, detoxification is less noticeable.

## Meal Replacement Bones for Kitties

Some cats enjoy sections of chicken, duck, or turkey necks or wings. Don't be surprised if they growl, stalk or pounce on them. Giving them in the bathtub can keep the house clean.

**THE CLASSIC DOG RECIPE**  
(daily fare for a 50 lb dog)

- 2 1/2 cups Ground Raw Meaty Bones (ground chicken backs, turkey necks, duck necks, etc)  
(1 1/4 lb)

OR

- 2 cups Ground or chunked raw muscle meat (beef, lamb, chicken, turkey, buffalo, ostrich, etc.)
- (1 lb) (preferably with organ meats - 1/6 of total meat portion)  
plus 2T 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.)

Optional: 1 clove fresh garlic, 1” cube fresh ginger (grind with vegetables).

Optional: 1 raw egg – Add last, mix in well. If you like, mash up shell and include for more minerals.

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 water if too dry. Multiply quantities to make a big batch. Keep in fridge up to 3 days or freeze in portions.

**Recommended Supplements** (add just before serving):

- 1/2 to 1T Essential Fatty Acid source for balanced omega-3s and 6s –  
Iceland Pure Salmon Oil, Ultra Oil or Animal Essentials EFA capsules
- 1/2 tsp. Digestive Enzymes – for greater absorption of nutrients
- 1/2 tsp. Kelp, Seameal, or other trace mineral supplement

**Other Supplements and Additives:**

Digestive Aid: Good Digestion (enzymes and probiotics), Animal Essentials Plant Enzymes & Probiotics

Skin Problems: Enzymes Plus (digestive enzymes with trace minerals)

Multi-Purpose: Vetline Vitamins, Missing Link, Animal Essentials Herbal Multi-Vitamin

Arthritis: K-9 or Level 5000 Liquid Health, Connectin, DGP herbal anti-inflammatory

Fleas: BodyGuard (sulfur-containing supplement that rejuvenates skin and discourages fleas)

**THE CLASSIC CAT RECIPE**  
(daily fare for a 10# cat)

- 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.
- 3/4 tsp. Edible human-grade Bonemeal (calcium source - provides the “bone” for the meat)
- 2 T Ground raw green & orange vegetables (carrot, sweet potato, zucchini, parsley, kale, other greens, etc.)

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 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.

**Recommended Supplements (add just before serving):**

- Essential fatty acid supplement - cats need an animal-based product -  
Icelandic Salmon Oil, Ultra Oil, or Animal Essentials EFA capsules (pierce and squeeze on food)
- Kelp or trace mineral supplement
- Digestive Enzymes - to increase assimilation of nutrients

**Other Supplements and Additives:**

Urinary Health: Enzymes pH (enzymes and urinary tract protectants & acidifiers), Animals Apawthecary  
Tinkle Tonic (soothes and lubricates the urinary tract and reduces inflammation)

Digestive Help: Good Digestion (enzymes with probiotics)

Multi-Purpose: Vetline Feline or Feline Missing Link

Skin Problems: Salmon oil or other fatty acids in combination with enzymes to aid fatty acid breakdown

Fleas: BodyGuard (improves skin quality and imparts a scent that fleas don’t like)

Arthritis/Old Age: Healthy Drops (glucosamine supplement that reduces stiffness and soreness)

## Ready-Made Resources - Frozen Fresh Meals and Bones

### **Stella & Chewy's** (stellaandchewys.com)

- Grain-free complete diets for dogs (and cats) in chicken, beef, lamb or duck with goose.
- Contains 96% meat and bones, 4% vegetables and supplements.
- Available in 1.5oz Mini-steaks and 8oz Steaks.
- Manufactured in their own plant in Wisconsin.
- Certified Food Safe, HHP pasteurizing technique uses high water pressure to kill bacteria without heat.
- You can go online to check out ingredient sources, search batch codes for lab results of pathogen testing.

### **Natural Pet Pantry** (naturalpetpantry.com)

- Local company located in Burien with their own plant.
- Wide variety of complete raw diets for dogs in buffalo, chicken, duck and turkey.
- Cooked "Pantry Stews" for dogs in chicken, turkey and buffalo with veggies, no grains.
- Many meat and bone grinds, meat-only grinds, even one with tripe.
- Complete cat foods in turkey or chicken.
- Whole chicken wings, chicken necks and duck necks.
- Mixed ground vegetables and fruit mixture, made to add to raw meat for a complete diet.

### **Nature's Variety** (naturesvariety.com/raw\_products)

- Grain-free complete diets for dogs (and cats) in chicken, beef, lamb, organic chicken, venison and rabbit.
- Contains 95% meat and 5% fruits and vegetables, plus supplements and extras.
- Raw diets are available in 1oz medallions, 8oz patties and economical 2# chubs.
- Manufactured in their own USDA plant in Lincoln, Nebraska.

### **Pepperdogz & Peppercatz** (pepperdogz.com)

- Local Bellevue company with their own plant.
- Canine meals contain free range chicken, turkey or buffalo, with organic vegetables and supplements.
- Feline meals contain free range chicken or turkey, with organic vegetables and supplements.
- Formulas were developed by Dr. Jackie Obando, a holistic veterinarian on Mercer Island.

### **R.O.A.R. "Raw Options for Animal Rearing"**

- House brand for All The Best Pet Care, from USDA plant in Oregon.
- Whole recreational bones - beef and buffalo marrow and knuckle bones.
- Whole meal replacement bones – turkey necks and turkey neck sections.
- Ground turkey necks and ground chicken backs, economical base for home-prepared diets.

### **Recommended Reading:**

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 New Natural Cat, Anitra Frazier

## COOKED RECIPES FOR DOGS (with grain)

### Any Meat with Oatmeal One Pot Dinner

- 1 cup quick oats
- 2 cups water with 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 lb. (2 cups) any kind of ground meat, including ground poultry parts – may include organs
- Optional – 1/2 to 1 cup ground raw mixed veggies, fresh or frozen

1. Bring water and salt to a boil in medium saucepan.
2. Add oats and cook one minute, stirring occasionally.
3. Remove from heat, cover and let cool slightly.
4. Add meat all at once and stir. The heat of the oatmeal should barely cook it.
5. Cool to lukewarm and add vegetables if used, and supplements.\*

This makes 4 to 5 cups of food, half meat and half oats. You can reduce oats or increase meat if desired. Leftovers can be refrigerated.

### One Whole Stewed Chicken for Dogs

One whole chicken with giblets, approx 3.5 lbs

1 1/2 cups brown rice, uncooked

4 cups sliced mixed veggies – comb. of carrots, yams, celery, parsley, kale, squash, zucchini, other greens

4 to 10 garlic cloves, chopped

3 quarts filtered water

1. Remove giblets and set aside. Using a large knife or poultry shears, cut chicken in half or quarters.
2. Cover with water in large pot, add rice and simmer gently for 90 minutes until rice is soft and chicken is falling from the bones.
3. Add vegetables and garlic and simmer for 45 minutes until vegetables are soft.
4. Cool. Remove chicken, coarsely cut up meat and skin, pick out large bones.
5. Salt to taste.
6. Save neck, liver and gizzard to feed raw, or sauté liver and gizzard lightly and serve as a special treat!

Recipe makes meals that are approximately 50% meat, 25% brown rice and 25% vegetables.

This stew will last for many meals, and you can freeze some in portions for future use.

\*Just before serving each meal, add digestive enzymes, essential fatty acid supplement, kelp and bone meal (unless you are feeding poultry parts at other meals). Follow quantities listed on supplement container.

#### ALL THE BEST PET CARE

3037 78<sup>th</sup> Ave SE, Mercer Island (206) 232-4377 • 8050 Lake City Way NE (206) 524-0199  
2713 E. Madison (206) 329-8565 • 2127 Queen Anne Av N (206) 283-3959 • 1909 NW Market St (206) 782-1500  
2820 Alki Av SW (206) 938-7501 • 13510 Aurora Av N (206) 267-5090  
17875 Redmond Way, Redmond (425) 881-2232 • 1590 NW Gilman Blvd, Issaquah (425) 369-8383  
[www.allthebestpetcare.com](http://www.allthebestpetcare.com)