

DOG FOOD INFORMATION FACT SHEET

compiled by Ruth Goldman, BGSR Volunteer

Does your dog have bad breath, lethargy, itchy, inflamed skin or paws, a greasy coat, red or waxy ears, indigestion or intermittent diarrhea? Is he or she uninterested in eating? These are just a few examples of symptoms dogs can exhibit from eating food that is lacking in nutrients or contains ingredients to which they're allergic. We at BGSR have noticed more and more dogs coming into rescue with all kinds of health problems. Some of this undoubtedly stems from poor breeding but some of it is also a result of improper nutrition. We recently took in a dog that has a permanently enlarged heart because she was fed Old Roy all of her life. Another volunteer dog's had a toxic reaction to commercial dog food and almost died. Countless rescue dogs suffer from ear infections, itchy skin, indigestion and joint problems. Along with providing regular health care and adequate exercise and attention, feeding your dog high-quality dog food is one of the best things you can do to help your dog live a happy, healthy life.

Unfortunately, feeding your dogs high-quality food is not cheap. Expect to pay \$30-\$40 for a 35#-40# bag of food when buying the best commercial brands. We realize that this may not be affordable for some of you; therefore we've included information on how to decipher the ingredients on the dog food bag and what you should look for when buying food for your dog. Keep in mind that there is no one perfect food. Dogs have different allergies (chicken, turkey, lamb, dairy, yeast, corn, fish meal, to name a few), tastes, and activity levels. You may need to try some different foods before you settle on a few brands that work best for your dog. Many of these companies offer sample bags that you can get for free at local pet stores. It is healthy to switch your dog's food a few times a year. This keeps things interesting for them and helps them avoid developing an allergy to one particular type of meat or grain. When switching remember to do it gradually; start with a small amount of new food and spend about a week to 10 days switching them over to the new food. Also keep in mind that your dog may not outwardly manifest symptoms of a food-related problem; many veterinarians speculate that the inferior quality of standard pet food ingredients account for the huge rise in cancer and other auto-immune diseases in dogs. This information is intended as a resource for anyone interested; if you want to research the topic further we encourage you to check out some of the additional resources listed at the end of this article.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE TOP FIVE INGREDIENTS IN DOG FOOD

Dog food ingredients are listed in order of weight of content so here's what to look for (and what to look out for):

1.) Whole, fresh meats or single-source meat meal (*human grade is best*)

Some type of meat should be one of the first two ingredients and the more meat, the better since dogs need lots of protein.

AVOID Meat by-products. This is OK after the first 5 ingredients but NOT the best source of protein. Meat by-products can contain, "lungs, spleen, kidneys, brain, livers, blood, bone, partially defatted low temperature fatty tissue, and stomachs and intestines."

AVOID Meat digest. This is the worst possible source of protein.

TRY TO CHOOSE a product that contains specific meats. For example, "Beef" is better than "Meat," or "Turkey" is better than "Poultry."

2.) Whole, unprocessed grains, vegetables and other foods. Unprocessed foods contain more nutrients.

AVOID fillers or fragments like brewer's rice, bran, corn gluten.

If you see a food that has meat as the first ingredient and then lists 4 fillers next, keep in mind that the product is mostly filler.

TRY TO AVOID FOOD CONTAINING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

"Generic" fats or proteins--these can contain fat from ANY source. Instead, if you have to choose a food with fat, look for one containing a recognizable fat such as beef or chicken fat.

Artificial colors. Dogs don't care what color their food is. These are added purely as a marketing tool and are not good for your dog.

Artificial preservatives (including BHA, BHT, or Ethoxyquin). Ethoxyquin has been linked to minor and major health problems in dogs. BHA and BHT are suspected carcinogens. Choose a food that is naturally preserved instead.

Propylene glycol. This can be toxic when consumed in large amounts.

Sweeteners. These are added to make food taste better but are not necessary or healthy for dogs.

SOME OF THE BEST FOODS

The following foods contain good quality sources and adequate amounts of protein (many are human grade) as well as unprocessed grains. They also contain a minimum (and in some cases none) of the offensive ingredients listed above. Not all of these dog foods will be available at a retailer near you but you can contact the manufacturer or check their web site to find the nearest dealer; more and more pet accessory stores, grooming salons and training facilities are carrying high quality foods. For some of the products listed we've just included one type of food; if you find another in your local pet food store check the ingredients to make sure it's a good one. One more thing: lots of brands are now adding glucosamine or some other type of supplement and claiming it will aid your dogs health. In all likelihood the amounts are non-therapeutic; that is, the food doesn't have enough of the supplement in it to help your dog at all. Since foods rarely list how much of a particular ingredient they've added we'd recommend never relying on dog food for additional supplements. Instead add the supplement directly to their food.

Best In Show Power Food

Best In Show

(800) 364-3287

www.bestinshowpowerfood.com

California Natural

Natura Pet Products

(800) 532-7261

www.naturapet.com

Canidae

Canidae Corporation

(800) 398-1600

www.canidae.com

Eagle Pack Holistic Select

Eagle Pet Products, Inc.

(800) 255-5959

www.eaglepack.com

Evolve Natural Pet Food

Triumph Pet Products

(800) 331-5144

<http://www.triumphpet.com/evolve.html>

Flint River LC Dog Food

Flint River Ranch

(909) 682-5048

www.naturapet.com

Innova

Natura Pet Products

(800) 532-7261

www.naturapet.com

Solid Gold

Solid Gold Health Products for Pets

(619) 258-1914

www.solidgoldhealth.com

Pinnacle

Breeder's Choice Pet Foods

(800) 255-4286

www.breederschoice.com

Wellness Super5Mix

Old Mother Hubbard

(800) 225-0904

www.oldmotherhubbard.com

Wysong Maintenance

Wysong Corporation

(608) 748-0233

www.wysong.net

SOME COMMON FOODS TO AVOID

These foods are listed because they contain a meat by-product, animal digest, filler or one of the other offensive ingredients listed above in the top five ingredients. Your vet may have recommended one of these brands but your vet's expertise is in medical care for your dog and not necessarily nutrition. Furthermore, the pet food industry has exploded in the last decade and it is very difficult for vets to keep track of what's new on the market, what ingredients brands are currently using, etc. So, the best thing you can do for your dog is read the ingredients yourself and make an informed decision about what you're feeding her/him.

Bil-Jac

Cornucopia

Diamond's Premium Adult

Eukanuba Adult

Iams Maintenance Adult

Natural Life Adult

Nature's Recipe Lamb & Rice
Nutro Max Naturally Preserved
Precise Foundation Formula
Purina ONE
Science Diet Maintenance
Sensible Choice Adult Dog
Pedigree Prime

The information in this article was drawn from a variety of sources including *The Whole Dog Journal*, *The Nature of Animal Healing*, *Dr. Pitcairn's Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats*, various Internet sites, numerous trips to the pet store to read ingredients and one volunteer's struggle with German shepherds with allergies and other food related health problems.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Whole Dog Journal:

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

www.whole-dog-journal.com

1-800-829-9165

The Nature of Animal Healing

Martin Goldstein, DVM

Ballantine Books, 1999

The Holistic Guide for a Healthy Dog

Wendy Volhard, Kerry Brown; 1995

Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to

Natural Health for Dogs & Cats

Richard H. Pitcairn and Susan Hubble Pitcairn; 1995

Nutrition and Health for Dogs: Keep Your Dog Happy

& Healthy with Natural Preventative Care & Remedies

Earl Mindell; 1998

Pet Allergies: Remedies for an Epidemic

Alfred Plechner, DVM, and Martin Zucker

<http://www.goodpet.com>