

Recommended Feeding Practices

It is indeed confusing trying to sift through the labeling of the various feeding manufacturers and come to a conclusion about what would be best for your dog. Almost every package says “Premium” or some other such claim, and the consumer is left scratching his head as to what is best for his dog. And while I am not at the forefront of canine nutrition science, there are a few things I have learned along the way in my breeding and raising dogs ... and in my never-ending quest to learn more about them ... that will help steer you in the right direction concerning your food choice.

Basically, there are two major types of nutritional requirements your dog has:

- (1) Tissue-Building Requirements, and
- (2) Energy-Producing Requirements.

That's it. I mean, other than some trace minerals and vitamin requirements, the two basic needs your dog has all boil down to (1) the perpetual rebuilding of his tissues, which requires protein, and (2) the constant need to supply himself with energy, which requires fats and oils. The canine athlete needs high-quality protein sources to do the former, and he needs usable fat and oil sources to do the latter. Sprinkle in a balanced complement of vitamins, trace minerals, and a little fiber ... and you have a well fed bulldog. The K.I.S.S. principle.

To the person looking for the absolute *best* manner of feeding your canine athlete, you should attempt to mimic his natural diet, which would require the use of **WHOLE ANIMALS**, who themselves were fed the absolute finest plant material in accordance with *their* natural diets. Feeder animals like goats, rabbits, chickens, etc. - themselves all fed organic foods - are an ideal food source. You would have to learn how to slaughter your own animals, grind them up, and individually freeze-pack the patties to serve your dogs. This would be the best you could possibly do for animals nutritionally. Simply put, this is what your dogs were designed to eat, whole animals, and no “commercial diet” can adequately duplicate God's perfect balance already created for you.

The trouble is, it is just not practical for most of us pet owners to raise and feed our dogs whole animals, so we must cut corners and choose a feed based upon what it is “convenient” for us. In doing so, we sacrifice what is best for our dogs, for what is best for *us*. Conscientious owners try to supplement and make up for the inherent inadequacy of kibble, while careless (or clueless) owners just feed their dogs “whatever is cheapest.” Before I get into which of the kibbled feeds is best for your dogs, I wanted to give some starting points of investigation to those who would consider attempting to supply their dogs with a diet of whole animals. The first and easiest method (if you can afford it) would simply be to buy already-ground feeder animals from a supplier. The one I have used is Hare Today (<http://www.hare-today.com/>), and they provide impeccable service. If you would like to shop and compare prices among the various potential animal-feeder distributors, go to Kingsnake.com (<http://www.kingsnake.com/>), and search their classified ads, because this is what reptile aficionados have to do -- constantly buy feeder animals -- so you will find a lot of vendors of same on this website.

However, if you have the resources, the time, and the inclination, you might want to consider breeding your own feeder animals. The exact techniques, husbandry, and feeding of these animals is beyond the scope of this article, but (as far as rodents go) your best point of origin to get yourself set up to do this would be Freedom Breeders (<http://www.freedombreeder.com/>). This outfit will sell all of the materials you need to breed rodents. As for breeding bunnies, goats, and other items I am sure Hare Today could point you in the right direction.

At any rate, the advantage to feeding this kind of feed is simply its “perfection” for your dogs. The animals are kept disease-free by you, are fed and supplemented with appropriate feeds by you, and then are harvested to provide the perfect meal for your dogs. As to how to prepare this kind of home-grown livestock for your canine athletes, the meat grinder is the way to go. You grind everything: the whole animal, bones, skull, and all. There are any of a number of meat

grinders you can order over the internet, but here is one I found:

Doug Care Equipment
P.O. Box 1058
Springville, CA 93265-1058
(559) 539-3076

<http://www.dougcare.com/processingequipment/>



Meat Grinders like this one are needed to process your own serious effort at feeding your dogs completely natural.

Doug Care Equipment not only has meat grinders that range from large to small, but it has meat saws, shrink wrappers, vacuum sealers, and all kinds of nice processing equipment that would apply for feeder animals as small as rodents to as large as goat, venison, boar, or better. Check it out if you are interested in feeding the very best for your dogs.

The above equipment would also apply to those who, instead of feeding raw whole animals, choose to concoct homemade diets based on what they can buy at the store. There are literally thousands of different meals, and combinations of ingredients, that one could put together into a common homemade diet. Here is a simple diet one could make for their dogs.

Broiled Beef Chunks
 Chicken Hearts, Gizzards, Livers
 Canned Jack Mackerel
 Cheese Blocks
 Bone Meal
 Flax Oil/Beef Lard
 Potatoes
 Veggie Mix

Mind you, this is not the absolutely best meal you can make for your dogs, but it is a decent homemade feed schedule on a budget. How much of each ingredient you add would be contingent upon how many dogs you are feeding. For the beef, you would sear the outside, but leave the inside blood rare. You would boil the chicken innards and add the water. For the jack mackerel, you would

simply dump the contents from the can, by proportion, into your mix. The cheese and bone meal are added to increase the calcium levels, because meat by itself contains too much phosphorous.

With the potatoes, you are simply adding a cheap energy source. Although, again, dogs don't "need" carbohydrates, they *can* utilize them if properly cooked. Simply bake your potatoes and just add a little flax or lard for variety, and then put your veggie mix in to cover your trace minerals.

With the veggies, you are attempting to simulate those few times that a canine will "chew on some grass," or whatever vegetable matter he may ingest via the stomach contents of his prey. This is doubtless where the trace minerals come into play as an addendum to a wild canid's diet. To prepare your veggie mix, you should have an electric vegetable chopper. Simply throw in some spinach, collards, mustard greens, carrots, a little rosemary, some sage, and maybe some cilantro, blueberries, (or whatever veggie combo you like), and mix it up fine. Add it raw to your above concoction, and grind it all up together, and you will have yourself a decent, balanced meal to serve your athletes, which will be rich in nutrients, enzymes, fats, and oils.

Remember, this is but one idea. You can use hardboiled eggs in the place of one of the protein sources if you like. Again, there are an infinity of potential combinations. Just use your imagination and be aware that MEAT and FAT are the primary ingredients of any superior canine ration, but that bones are an important addendum, as are trace minerals. If you have any doubts, you can visit Nutrition.org (<http://www.nutrition.org/>) which is filled with up-to-date information on all kinds of nutrition matters, both canine and human. The following is a link that might be of particular interest to the competitive enthusiast:

<http://www.nutrition.org/cgi/content/full/128/12/2686S>

Kibbled Feeds

Now to the subject of kibbled feeds. There are an endless array of brand names, different formulations within brand names, just all different kinds of companies from which to choose. There are an equal array of price ranges, from \$135/bag to \$11/bag, which adds to the confusion.

How do you select the right brand? Which formulation within each brand applies to your dogs? What can you afford? These are the kinds of questions that most people ask themselves prior to buying their dog feed.

Since this magazine "is" *The Healthy Bulldog*, naturally we are going to side with quality over price. The idea is

to keep only as many dogs as you can feed the best food possible to. ***That is the ongoing theme of this magazine.*** It simply makes no sense keeping so many dogs that you have to feed them substandard feed. You should only keep as many dogs as you can do your very best for.

With that in mind, the question thus becomes “What is best?” I have my own personal preference, but this does not mean there aren’t other superb formulas from what I use personally. My purpose here isn’t to steer anyone in the direction of buying the exact food I myself use, my purpose is to attempt to point the reader in the direction of making better selection choices in general. As a general rule, you do NOT want feed with any of the following:

1. Corn, Wheat, or Soy - BAD
2. Glutens in any form - BAD
3. Beet Pulp - BAD
3. Excessive Carbs of any kind - BAD
4. Artificial Preservatives - BAD
5. Meat from Diseased Sources - BAD

Conversely, what you are looking for in a feed is what your dog truly needs: Protein from high-quality sources (meat, fish, eggs) and fats and oils from high-quality sources (beef, chicken, flax, canola). Meats and fats/oils should form the bulk of any high-end feed, and you should realize that carbohydrates are not needed, but are really just filler. You must realize that all kibbled feeds are going to contain some carbs, but they should be held to a minimum.

Another key group of items to look for in a true high-end feed are ***fermentation products*** and added ***digestive enzymes***. The reason these are so critical is that natural feeds contain enzymes in them, when raw, but which are lost through the heated extrusion process needed to create the kibble. Therefore, the extreme heat (which is necessary to render the carbs usable) actually renders the meat UNusable, or of lessor use and value, due to the loss of those important enzymes. Therefore, truly good feed manufacturers compensate for this by adding fermentation products and supplemental enzymes to make it easier on your dog to digest (and thus utilize) the kibbled feed. So here is what you are looking for in a superior feed:

1. Meats and Eggs (Human Grade) - GOOD
2. Fats and Oils - GOOD
3. MINIMAL use of Carbs - GOOD
3. NO Beet Pulp - GOOD
4. Added Fermentation Products - GOOD
5. Added Digestive Enzymes - GOOD

So now, let’s take a look at a few top quality feeds to give you an idea of what to look for in selecting something new and better to feed your athletes, if feeding whole animals is something that is not practical to do for you:



California Natural

California Natural is a balanced, simple feed made of Chicken Meal, Ground Brown Rice, Ground White Rice, Sunflower Oil, Flaxseed, and Vitamins & Minerals. They say their product is “carefully made with ingredients that are

specifically selected to be tasty, easy to digest and nutrient rich, for dogs who cannot tolerate typical pet food ingredients. 100% chicken meal is used as the only animal protein source, along with wholesome white and brown rice, and a combination of sunflower oil and flaxseed, to supply essential Omega 6 and Omega 3 fatty acids which are critical for skin and coat health.”

Now the reader will note only one protein source, and that the two fat sources, are actually oils (sunflower/flax), with no animal fat. Nor does this product have the added digestive enzymes and probiotics. These details are weaknesses in a sense, but it is still basically a good solid feed. Here are the stats:

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Protein | 21.54% |
| Fat | 11.17% |
| Fiber | 3.69% |
| Moisture | 9.5% |
| Calories (lb) | 1860 Kcal/Lb |
| Calories (kg) | 4092 Kcal/Kg |
| Calories (cup) | 511 Kcal/Cup |

California Natural is manufactured by Natura Pet Products (<http://www.naturapet.com/>). Below is another, even better, feed by the same company:

Innova



Innova is a step up from California Natural, as it has a broader spectrum of ingredients to choose from. The first 10 ingredients are Turkey, Chicken, Chicken meal, Ground Barley, Ground Ground Brown rice, Potatoes, Ground White Rice, Chicken Fat, Herring, Apples, etc. This feed also has the essential probiotics that aid in the digestion of the dog. This makes Innova a “step up” from the California Natural, again though both are manufactured by the same company. Here are their stats:

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| Protein | 24% |
| Fat | 14% |
| Fiber | 3% |
| Moisture | 9.5% |
| Calories (kg) | 4186 Kcal/Kg |
| Calories (Cup) | 557 Kcal/Cup |
| Calories (lb) | 1895 Kcal/Lb |