

Making Your Dog's Food

Many of us have been trained by pet food companies to think that our dogs can really only get adequate nutrition if they're fed out of a bag of pre-made kibble. Now, since we are able to feed ourselves and our families, providing healthy amounts of proteins and vitamins without a pre-made bag, we most likely can feed our dogs without one as well.

It may seem a little scary to try to figure out what types of food and what ratios to use, but it's really not that complicated. Just like for humans, if you feed your dog a variety of different foods they will be more likely to get all the different minerals and vitamins they need. You can choose to feed a raw diet (in which enzymes and amino acids are not cooked off) or you can feed a cooked diet. If you feed raw, remember to puree the fruits and veggies so they are digestible: dogs have shorter digestive tracts than we do.

Dogs should not eat chocolate, anything with caffeine, tomatoes, raisins, grapes, onions, macadamia nuts or too much avocado.

For a normal, healthy dog, roughly 75 percent of the diet should be protein, 15 percent vegetables and fruits, and 10 percent fat. You should either give your dog bones, in addition, or a bone meal supplement.

Charts showing the daily caloric requirements for most normal dogs can be found on pages 72-73 of Donald Strombeck, DVM's book "Home Prepared Dog and Cat Diets." For example, a 60 pound adult dog needs approximately 1500 calories a day, and a 20 pound adult dog needs about 650. You'll be able to adjust calories based on whether your dog is maintaining his or her weight.

Even if you are giving your dog a prepared diet of kibble or raw patties, that doesn't mean you can't supplement the diet with healthy things like yogurt (which has probiotics), eggs (an excellent source of protein), fish oil (which is great for the skin as well as the rest of the body) or the like. Just make sure you add small amounts at first and go slowly, or your dog may have a difficult time digesting the new foods. Whenever you add to or change a dog's diet, do it very slowly or tummy upset is likely to occur.