

Feeding your puppy or dog



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Due to their rapid growth and development, it is very important that puppies are fed an appropriate diet. At least 80 per cent of a puppy's diet should be made up of a good quality, well balanced puppy food: puppies are generally quite happy to have a diet entirely composed of puppy food.

Special balanced diet

The professional range of puppy foods (e.g. Hill's, Royal Canin, Eukanuba, Advance) are not only completely balanced puppy diets but they also offer a very high standard of nutrition and high digestibility, resulting in fewer stools being produced. Because of the high digestibility of the professional range of diets, a smaller quantity of these diets generally needs to be fed compared to many supermarket brands. A full range of the professional diets is available at our clinic and our staff are trained to be able to guide you as to what best suits your puppy. These diets are very palatable but a full money back guarantee is also offered if your puppy will not eat the food.

It is also acceptable to supplement your puppy's diet with freshly cooked food such as meat, chicken and vegetables, and also occasional table scraps. But do not feed your puppy any rich or fatty leftovers and certain foods need to be avoided (see below). And remember, the majority of your puppy's diet should be a well-balanced commercial food to avoid the risk of growth or dietary-related problems.

Feeding habits

The most rapid stage of your puppy's growth is in the first six months of life. Puppies should be fed three times a day until six months of age. After this you may reduce to twice-a-day feeding and by 12 months of age once-a-day feeding is adequate (although it is acceptable to continue to divide their total daily allowance into two meals).

Most commercial foods will have feeding guidelines on the side of the pack, with the recommended amount to feed per day for your puppy's weight and age. Please remember that this is only a guide; just like people, different dogs need different amounts of food. Also remember that if you are feeding other foods, you will need to reduce the amount of puppy food given. It is particularly important that large breed puppies are not overfed, as this can cause them to grow too quickly, leading to joint problems and arthritis later in life. Be careful not to overfeed: scraps have calories too!

A good rule of thumb for assessing a dog's weight is to compare the dog's ribs with the bones on the back of your hand. Both should feel similar; there should be a small amount of flesh covering but they should still be easily felt. If you are concerned about how much to feed your puppy, please discuss this with the vet or our nurses.

With any changes to feeding, it is always best to introduce a new food gradually, increasing the proportion of the new food over four to five days. This will help to prevent any stomach upsets and diarrhoea from rapid food changes.

Precautions

Please be aware that certain human foods may be toxic to dogs. In particular, avoid giving dogs any form of onions and garlic (which can cause damage to red blood cells), even onion powder or bolognaise sauce, and grapes (which can cause kidney problems in large amounts). Chocolate is also very toxic to dogs and should not be fed to them under any circumstances. It is also a good idea to avoid feeding dogs fatty foods, as these can cause inflammation of the pancreas.