

Getting started on a raw food diet for your dog



First of all, if you want to do your own research, you will find that this type of diet comes under a number of names but they all mean basically the same thing ie feeding your dog the food it was designed to eat.

- **BARF:** Bones And Raw Foods or Biologically Appropriate Raw Foods
- **SARF:** Species Appropriate Raw Foods
- **Prey Model**
- **Raw Feeding**

In each of the above cases, owners are attempting to feed their dogs a more natural diet - one similar to that eaten by wolves. While your terrier or spaniel may not look like a wolf, it is descended from them and needs to eat similar foods. If it helps, try to imagine what a fox might eat...a chicken, a rabbit, a lamb, etc. What's more, they would eat it all - meat, bones, intestines, liver, kidneys, heart, lungs, etc. There are companies that manufacture complete meals (usually in the form of a specialist frozen mince) but it is also easy to produce your own and it will cost you about the same as a lower quality dry dog food.

How do I switch?

You have two choices when swapping over to raw, either suddenly or over a week or so. Some dogs react differently to raw food for about 4 days until their stomach adapts to the new diet. This may be because their usual dry food is digested differently to raw. For this reason it is often better to do a clean break rather than a protracted switch over and for your dog to have 3 or more smaller meals rather than 2 larger ones per day for a week or so. You might find your dog adapts better if it has a day with only water and no food before you switch. While your dog is acclimatising to its new diet, don't give it any dairy or wheat based treats (yoghurt, biscuits, etc).

Once you and your dog have settled into a "raw" routine, you may find that yoghurts have a limited use as a probiotic because the acid levels in your dog's stomach are now too high for these bugs to survive (although they still have value as a nutrient rich food). Instead, you may find that green unwashed tripe is a better alternative (ask your raw food supplier) but I wouldn't worry too much as your dog will develop its own intestinal flora naturally.

How do I start?

It is best to start with a single meat, usually chicken, and after 7-10 days add a second (tripe). Once you are happy that your dog is tolerating these, you can add a third (lamb or offal) and eventually a fourth (beef, fish, pork). The aim is to have a good varied diet as the more variety, the better the balance. As well as adding vegetables (or SmartBarf™), it is worth giving a medium sized dog a couple of eggs per week. Once your dog is familiar with its new diet, you can start to add raw meaty bones eg whole chicken carcasses, necks or ribs - you should not feed cooked bones at any time. Although popular, chicken wings can be dangerous because their V-shape can lodge in the throat and so these should be cut at the joint with a pair of poultry shears. Chicken wings also tend to be too small for most dogs and so they swallow them whole and don't learn to eat properly. This can result in dogs vomiting up partially digested meaty bones and eating them a second time. It is therefore better to give your dog larger items like ribs or chicken carcasses until they are used to their new diet. It is also wise not to feed the large marrow bones that cartoon dogs always seem to eat (often referred to as recreational bones) as these can be too hard. The marrow itself is a very good food and so, if you can find these bones with the knuckle ends removed, dogs will quite happily lick it out.

80% meat + 10% offal + 10% bones

with an additional 7.5% - 15% in the form of vegetables

The secret to a good and easy raw diet for dogs is variety and a freezer. It's also important to realise that it isn't necessary to give a dog a complete and balanced meal every day - it just has to be balanced over 10 days or so. To achieve this, the equivalent of one meal per 10 days should be offal (10%) another should be bone (10%) and half a meal should be an oily fish (5%). Of course, these foods can be given together instead (as are most commercially prepared raw meals). Up to 15% of a dog's diet can be vegetable based but these are fed for their nutrients, not their calories - avoid starchy foods and instead concentrate on herbs, leafy greens and super foods including seeds, nuts and berries. Raw unwashed green tripe is useful, especially for poorly dogs, as it contains protein, fat, vegetable based nutrients and good bacteria.



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www.SmartBarf.co.uk

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Meat (incl. heart & tripe)

Any raw meat is suitable, including fish, although a useful tip is to freeze any wild foods eg fish and game and then defrost it before feeding. Obviously, like the raw meat you buy for yourself, it will carry bacteria but healthy raw fed dogs are unaffected by these common bacteria because their stomachs are too acidic for these bugs to survive (unlike yours so common sense health and hygiene rules apply). Not only can this meat be bought from your local butcher, farm shop or fishmonger as offcuts or waste but also from supermarkets when it is nearly out of date. There are also specialist raw pet mince suppliers who deliver nationally or who have distributors.

Offal (sweetbreads, kidneys, liver, lung)

The glands of an animal (kidneys, liver, sweetbreads) are usually excessively rich in nutrients and so a dog's diet should be no more than 10% of these. Other internal organs, such as heart and tripe can be treated as meat. Lungs contain large amounts of blood which, while nutritious, can result in an upset stomach if given to excess. For this reason, it is better to treat lungs as offal. No offal ingredient should be more than half of the 10% recommendation eg no more than 5% liver.

Vegetables (to mimic the contents of the intestines)

Often overlooked, but equally important and easily replicated. Intestines contain the semi-digested food of the prey (usually herbivores) and this can be replaced with a mixture of seeds, nuts, fruits, berries, vegetables, herbs, beans, etc. It is important to get a good range of ingredients ie some root crops (carrots, parsnips), some greens (spinach, broccoli), some non-greens (tomatoes, sweet potatoes), some fruits (apples, bananas), some seeds (pumpkin, sunflower), etc. The main thing is to include ingredients with important nutrients, minerals and vitamins - so don't just add a handful of rice, pasta and potatoes. It is also important to chop, shred, grate and pulp these so that the nutrients are available to the dog. Plant matter eaten by prey has been acted on by amylase to

breakdown cellulose Unfortunately dogs don't produce amylase in their saliva, nor do they chew their food, and so we need to assist them by replicating the semi-digested nature of these foods by lightly steaming or microwaving it and then freezing it. Defrosting the mixture will then make more nutrients available to your dog.

You will find it quicker and easier to use SmartBarf™ vegetable mix as all the hard work has already been done. Being dehydrated, you can reduce the vegetable content from 15% to 3% ie just add a spoonful or two of the powder to your dog's meat. For more information, visit SmartBarf.co.uk.

Bones

Dogs have evolved to eat bones and it would be rare for a problem to arise. They are your dog's most important source of minerals, especially calcium. They provide quality protein, fats, fat soluble vitamins and cartilage but it is vitally important that the bones are raw. Cooked bones are a definite no-no and so you shouldn't defrost carcasses (or minces containing bones) in a microwave. In addition, try to avoid big marrow bones - the marrow might be good but the bones are just too big and tough for most dogs. Raw chicken bones are ideal, and meaty chicken carcasses are readily available and cost very little (and are around 40% bone, 65% meat). Rib and neck from beef, pork and lamb are also beneficial so make friends with your local butcher or farm shop. Meaty bones provide an eating exercise, massage the gums, satisfy a psychological need that dogs have and act as a toothbrush - not just because they are abrasive but because dogs are pulling the meat and sinews off, which acts like dental floss.

How much do I feed?

A good place to start is 2.5% of bodyweight for an adult dog. i.e. a 15kg adult would need 375g per day. This will act as a good starting point but it will depend on how much exercise your dog gets and its metabolism so don't worry if you need to feed a different quantity.

Dog digestion

Please be aware that there are many differences between human digestion and dog digestion so what is good or necessary for us may not be for a dog.

Suggested reading

Kymthy Schultze, Tom Lonsdale, Ian Billingham, Ann Ridyard, Lew Olsen, Martin Goldstein, Pat McKay, Wendy Volhard, Kerry Brown, Diane Stein, C.J. Puotinen & Juliette de Bairacli Levy.



Seeds (20%): Buckwheat, Evening Primrose, Hemp, Linseed, Milk Thistle, Niger, Poppy, Pumpkin, Safflower, Sesame, Sunflower Hearts

Root Vegetables (15%): Beetroot, Carrots

Leafy Greens (14%): Cabbage, Spinach

Nuts (12%): Almonds, Brazils, Cashews, Coconut, Hazels, Peanuts, Walnuts

Beans (10%): Aduki Beans, Black Turtle Beans, Chickpeas, Haricot Beans, Locust Bean Pods, Mung Beans, Peas, Pinto Beans

Herbs (6%): Basil, Marjoram, Meadowsweet, Oregano, Sage, Spearmint, Thyme

Wild Seeds (5%): Clover, Meadow Flowers

Hedgerow Berries (5%): Elderberries, Hawthorn, Juniper, Rosehips

Other Vegetables (3%): Asparagus, Broccoli, Tomato

Spices (3%): Aniseed, Black Pepper, Caraway, Fennel

Tropical Fruits (3%): Banana, Dates, Goji, Papaya

Seaweed (2%)

Orchard Fruits (1%): Apple, Pear, Plum

Mediterranean Fruits (1%): Apricot, Peaches

This guide has been written by SmartBarf™, makers of a dehydrated blend of powdered seeds, nuts, fruits, berries, vegetables, herbs and beans...

The new way to feed your dog the old fashioned way.



To find out more about SmartBarf & the best diet for your dog visit:

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