

Homemade Raw Dog Food Guide

By Brianne Bindschadler

© 2020 Brianne Bindschadler

All rights reserved

www.JoyfulAnimal.com

Note to Readers: The following is for informational purposes only, and not intended to replace the advice of a veterinarian. The author cannot be held responsible for any decision(s) you, the reader, may make. Any application of recommendations stated in this publication is at the reader's discretion and sole risk.

Homemade Dog Food, Is It Difficult?

I used to think so. As a Vet Tech and a pet owner living in America, I was taught feeding dogs a homemade diet, without causing a nutritional deficiency, was near impossible. But when I investigated, the truth contradicted my education. Meeting a dog's nutritional requirements using fresh whole foods is actually simple and easy.

Of all the diets I examined, the best ones included raw meaty bones, organs, and vegetables. While some people say dogs should not be fed raw meat or bones or vegetables, I can find no scientific bases for any of these claims. On average, the dogs who eat these foods are some of the healthiest dogs to live on planet earth.

Many people worry their dog might get sick from bacteria in raw meat. Even some large veterinary associations warn against it. But, again, I can find no scientific evidence for this. In fact, many thousands of dogs eat raw meaty bones every day with no problem. Spoiled meat can make dogs sick, but fresh raw meat of a quality you could cook for yourself is a food dogs are built to digest.

The diet I describe here is not the only way you can feed a dog. Although a balanced raw diet is fantastic for most dogs and many health conditions have improved on a raw diet, I can't guarantee it's best for your dog. If your dog has a health problem, and you're not sure if a raw diet is right for them, it's best to consult a veterinarian educated in raw pet food before switching your dog's diet.

Note: Unfortunately, most veterinarians and other veterinary professionals receive little education in nutrition, and what they do learn, comes from large pet food companies who want to sell their product.

Different methods can be used to feed dogs a raw diet. Some dog owners enter their ingredients into a spread sheet, calculate nutrients, and adjust ingredients to match common nutrient standards. Some use a percentage based guideline, weighing and calculating each ingredient of their dog's meals to make sure they get exactly those ratios (example: 80% meat, 10% bone, 5% liver, 5% other secreting organ). Others have a more relaxed approach, using general concepts to balance their dogs diet over time, instead of in every meal (example: roughly half raw meaty bones, some organ meat, some vegetables, maybe some of what ever other healthy foods they may have on hand, all provided over a week or so). Dogs who eat precisely measured and calculated meals tend to be no healthier than dogs fed with the less complicated approach; while you can do all the calculations you desire, I've found them to be unnecessary and most often a waste of time.

I'm going to teach you a simple method to feeding dogs. I will tell you some of why I recommend what I do, and a bit of nutrition information, to help give you confidence

that this diet works. You don't have to remember it all; don't let it overwhelm you. At the end, I'll provide a summary of the most important information to remember, and of course, you can keep this guide handy for reference.

Let's start by identifying the nutrients a dog needs to survive. They consist of proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals; but, unlike humans, dogs have no need for carbohydrates. Most of these nutrients are provided through raw meaty bones. So, we'll talk about those first.

Raw Meaty Bones

The foundation of a successful raw diet is raw meaty bones (raw bones with meat attached). Raw bone provides a beautiful balance of all the minerals a dog needs to survive, several vitamins, healthy fat, and all but one of the essential amino acids. Raw meat contains highly digestible protein—including the essential amino acid missing in raw bone—and most B vitamins. Combined, raw bone and meat supply nearly all the nutrients a dog requires. And although I don't recommend any single ingredient diet, many dogs have survived and lived a healthy life on a diet of nearly all raw meaty bones.

Bones must be raw! Cooked bones can splinter into razor sharp edges and puncture a dog's digestive system. So do not let your dog eat the bones from the fried chicken you had for dinner. Raw bones are digestible and do not splinter like cooked bones.

Even when cooked bones are prepared in a way to make them safe—such as grinding cooked bones into pieces too small to cause injury—they're nutritionally inadequate. Cooking reduces the bioavailability of the minerals in bone; for best nutrition, feed your dog raw bones.

There are 2 types of raw bones:

Edible bones- bones soft enough for your dog to crunch into pieces and consume. Exactly which bones are edible depends on the bone's density and the dog's jaw strength, but edible bones generally come from small to medium size animals.

Recreational bones- bones too hard for your dog to consume but can be used as a chew toy. These bones generally come from large animals. Warning: heavy chewers can brake teeth on very dense bones such as large animal leg bones and antlers.

Only edible bones provide nutrition. Therefore, anywhere I mention raw meaty bones, I refer to raw meaty edible bones.

Many dogs do very well with roughly half or more of their total diet consisting of a variety of raw meaty bones. This nearly always averages out to a healthy amount of bone, despite different raw meaty bones containing different amounts of bone. However, if you're worried your dog may not get the right amount and would like a close estimation of how much bone is in your dog's diet, then here's what you need to know.

To provide your dog with enough calcium balanced with other minerals, feed them at least 10% edible bone. However, some dogs can become constipated from eating over 25% edible bone. So, between 10-25% is a good place to start. Also, the amount of meat should be at least equal to or greater than the quantity of bone.

In order to find out how much bone is in your dog's diet, you need to know approximately how much bone is in your chosen raw meaty bone, then do the math to estimate the amount in your dog's diet. Now I can hear some of you groan and say, "I hate math!" Don't give up yet. If you prefer to keep math to a minimum, I've created a cheat sheet for you.

Note: "whole chicken" or "whole turkey" from a grocery store does not truly mean whole because the birds have been gutted to remove all internal organs.

Raw Meaty Bones Cheat Sheet

To use this cheat sheet:

Step 1. Choose a raw meaty bone in one of the three columns.

Step 2. Look at the percentage at the top of that column. The percentage tells you approximately how much of your dog's food is to be composed of that type of raw meaty bone.

Note: If you choose a raw meaty bone from the 25% column, also add at least 25% boneless meat (so your dog's diet is at least half meat and bone).

Step 3. Feed your dog a variety of raw meaty bones over time.

75%	50%	25%
Chicken Split Breast	Whole Chicken, Guttled	Chicken Feet
Chicken Thigh	Chicken Back	Chicken Head
Whole Turkey, Guttled	Chicken Drumstick	Chicken Rib Cages
Turkey Breast	Chicken Leg Quarter	Duck Feet
Turkey Drumstick	Chicken Neck	Duck Frame
Turkey Thigh	Chicken Wing	Duck Head
<i>or other meaty bones containing 14-33% bone</i>	Whole Duck, Guttled	Rabbit Head
	Whole Wild Duck	<i>or other meaty bones containing >40% bone</i>
	Duck Neck	
	Duck Wing	
	Lamb Neck	
	Lamb Ribs	
	Lamb Shoulder Blade	
	Pork Feet	
	Pork Ribs	
	Pork Tails	
	Whole Rabbit, Guttled	
	Turkey Back	
	Turkey Neck	
	Turkey Wing	
	Veal Ribs	
	<i>or other meaty bones containing 20-50% bone</i>	

If you want to fine tune your recipes, here is a list of approximate bone percentages of meaty bones:

Whole Chicken, Guttled 32%

Chicken Back 44%

Chicken Drumstick 30%

Chicken Feet 60%

Chicken Head 75%

Chicken Leg (drumstick and thigh) 27%

Chicken Leg Quarter (drumstick, thigh, and portion of back) 30%

Chicken Neck with skin 36%

Chicken Neck without skin 59%

Chicken Rib Cages 80%

Chicken Split Breast 20%

Chicken Thigh 15-21%

Chicken Wing 46%

Whole Turkey, Guttled 21%

Turkey Back 41-50%

Turkey Breast 14%

Turkey Drumstick 20%

Turkey Neck 42%

Turkey Thigh 20%

Turkey Wing 33%

Whole Duck, Guttled 28%

Whole Wild Duck 38%

Duck Feet 60%

Duck Frame 75%

Duck Head 75%

Duck Neck 50%

Duck Wing 39%

Lamb Neck 32%

Lamb Ribs 27-45%

Lamb Shoulder Blade 24%

Pork Feet 30%

Pork Ribs 30-45%

Pork Tails 30%

Whole Rabbit, Gutted 28%

Rabbit Head 75%

Veal Ribs 35%

Sources for bone percentages:

- <https://dogsdinner2.webs.com/anyoldbone.htm>
- <https://www.dogsnaturallymagazine.com/bone-food-values-for-raw-feeding-dogs/>
- <https://perfectlyrawsome.com/raw-feeding-classifications/safe-edible-raw-meaty-bone-guide/bone-percentages-in-cuts-of-meat/>
- <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/>

To Grind or Not to Grind

Dogs can eat raw meaty bones either whole or ground. Chewing on a bone cleans a dog's teeth, helping them achieve or maintain excellent oral health. Not grinding is the best option for most dogs, but there are a few reasons why large pieces of food are not suitable for some. These include dogs who don't have enough teeth to chew, and dogs who try to swallow everything whole and may choke. For them, ground food is best. Plus, if your dog will not let you take anything out of their mouth without biting you, grind their food and work with a dog trainer to build trust between you and your dog, before you give them whole pieces of food.

If you choose to feed your dog large pieces of food (whole raw meaty bones, fruits, vegetables etc.) always supervise your dog. Make sure they chew and don't attempt to swallow the food whole or in pieces large enough to choke on. This is especially important for dogs who aren't used to chewing their food (small pieces of kibble are easy to swallow with no problem). Many dogs learn quickly how to chew food into pieces easy to swallow and really enjoy doing so.

If you choose to grind your dog's food, be sure to use a meat grinder that can handle soft bones. I use and recommend the Tasin TS-108 meat grinder from onestopjerkysshop.com. This is a #12 size grinder that can grind chicken, rabbit, and duck bones, but not turkey bones which are too hard and may break the machine. If you want to grind turkey bones, look for a commercial grinder size #22 or larger that has been successfully used by other pet owners to grind bones, such as the Weston Pro Series #22. I don't know of any meat grinder available to be used in a home kitchen that will grind bones larger than turkey bones.

Organs

The internal organs of a prey animal are rich in nutrients and basically nature's multivitamins for dogs. But, because organs are so nutrient rich, feeding too much of one type of organ meat over time can cause a nutrient toxicity. To avoid this problem, each type of organ meat should be no more than 10% of your dog's diet. There are exceptions, such as heart and green tripe, which are unlikely to cause nutritional toxicities; dogs can have much more of those. But in general, 10% is a safe limit.

Ideally dogs would eat every organ in their prey. But unfortunately, most stores don't sell many organ meats. So feed your dog as much variety as you can find. Your choices include but are not limited to...

- Liver (a highly nutritious organ meat and usually the easiest to find)
- Kidney
- Gizzard
- Spleen*
- Pancreas*
- Lung
- Heart (because the heart is a muscle it can be considered as both muscle meat and organ meat, so just make sure it's not the only organ meat you feed your dog)
- Brain
- Eyes
- Testicles (sometimes called "mountain oysters")
- Green Tripe (stomach of a ruminant)

*Spleen and pancreas are also called "sweetbreads"

Special note: All dog treats, including those made from dried organs meats, need to be considered in the dog's total diet. Dried meat and organ meats typically weigh a third to a fifth of what they weighed when they were fresh. While dried organ meats make great treats, be careful your dog doesn't get sick from eating too many of them.

Whole Prey

If you can get your hands on whole prey (whole animal carcasses with all the organs still inside), you've got it all! Whole prey provides meaty bones with all the organs, plus a bit of fur or feathers, and includes all the nutrition a dog needs to survive, although adding other foods can provide additional health benefits.

Vegetables

Vegetables provide vitamins, enzymes, and fiber while feeding the beneficial bacteria in your dog's gut (supporting the health of the gut microbiome). These good bacteria counter bad bacteria and are vital for your dog to stay healthy. Vegetables also contain many nutrients that help combat and prevent many degenerative diseases and so, may help dogs live healthier and longer. Although it is true vegetables are not necessary for a dog to survive, why deprive your dog of all the wonderful health benefits vegetables offer?

When feeding your dog vegetables, rotate through a wide variety. Don't feed your dog the same vegetable(s) every day.

To get the most benefit from vegetables, your dog will need some help. While chewing on large raw chunks may be enjoyable, most of the nutrition won't be digested. Finely chop and/or lightly cook the vegetables and a bit more of the nutrients will become available. But the best way is to crush or puree raw vegetables. This can be done in a food processor, blender, or juicer. If you use a juicer, mix the pulp and juice together, or feed your dog the pulp left over from making vegetable juice for yourself.

The more thoroughly crushed the vegetables are the better. Why? Because dogs are very poor at digesting cellulose. All herbivores spend a lot of time chewing and crushing their food to make the nutrition contained within the vegetables available for their body to absorb. Dogs are incapable of doing this as they have neither the right shape to their teeth nor jaw structure to do it.

Also, fermentation significantly increases the nutrient availability of vegetables. This is because fermented vegetables contain living good bacteria and enzymes that help break down the food, making more nutrients available for the body to absorb.

A few cautions:

- **Onions, garlic, leeks, chives, and scallions:** Although a small amount is okay, large amounts can cause Heinz body anemia. You may choose to avoid these vegetables to be extra safe. But small amounts of garlic can provide several health benefits, such as boosting the immune system and repelling parasites. Just be careful to limit your dog to only small amounts.
- **Cruciferous vegetables:** If given in large quantities over a long period of time, raw cruciferous vegetables can suppress thyroid function. But if you follow my advice to feed your dog a wide variety of vegetables, this shouldn't be a problem.
- **Exotic vegetables:** Dogs can eat any vegetable humans can, that I know of, as long as they are not eaten in excessive amounts (extra caution should be

taken with onions, garlic, leeks, chives, and scallions). But if you come across an unusual exotic vegetable, it may be worth doing a quick internet search to see if there are any credible reports of toxicity in dogs before giving it to your pooch. You can also ask a veterinarian. But, if the vegetable is very uncommon in your part of the world, don't be surprised if your vet's never heard of it.

- **Poisonous plants:** In general, if a plant or part of a plant is poisonous to humans, it's good to assume, they're not safe for dogs either.

To give you some ideas, here is a list of vegetables good for dogs. I recommend feeding dogs a variety of both leafy and non-leafy vegetables.

- Leafy Vegetables
 - Spinach
 - Kale
 - Romaine lettuce
 - Dandelion leaves
 - Parsley
 - Carrot tops
 - Collard greens
 - Green leaf lettuce
 - Or any other leafy vegetable safe for humans to eat (as long as leeks, chives, and scallions are limited to only small amounts)
- Non-leafy Vegetables:
 - Green Beans
 - Celery
 - Broccoli
 - Bell Peppers
 - Carrots
 - Zucchini
 - Pumpkin (more digestible cooked)
 - Sweet Potatoes (more digestible cooked)
 - Or any other vegetable safe for humans to eat (as long as onions and garlic are limited to only small amounts)
- If it helps you provide variety, think of all the colors of the rainbow and give your dog vegetables in all those colors.

Fruit

Fruit provides many of the same benefits as vegetables, including nourishing beneficial gut bacteria. Sweet ripe or over ripe fruit does not need “pre-chewed” like vegetables but instead can be fed in large pieces without loss of nutritional value.

What fruit can dogs eat? Any fruit that humans can eat, except grapes. Here are a few cautions concerning fruit:

- **Grapes or raisins (dried grapes):** Dogs getting sick or dying after eating grapes/raisins seems to be a more recent problem and no one seems to know why. Some theorize that it's modern pesticides or other chemicals sprayed onto grapes that are toxic and not grapes themselves. But without knowing for sure if any dogs got sick after eating organic home grown grapes, I recommend not feeding grapes to dogs. At least until more information becomes available, just don't risk it.
- **Apple and pear seeds:** Apples and pears are great, but the seeds are toxic when crushed and consumed in large amounts. To be extra safe, you can core apples and pears before giving them to your dog.
- **Pits:** Pits from fruit such as peaches, plums, avocados etc. are choking hazards and, if swallowed, can cause a gastrointestinal obstruction. So be sure to remove any pits before your dog fruit.
- **Avocados:** There is a myth circulating that avocados are toxic to dogs. But in fact, the flesh of the avocado is not toxic. It's the skin, pit, leaves, and bark of the avocado tree that are potentially toxic. The most common problems with dogs eating avocados are dogs choking on the pit or experiencing a bout of diarrhea and/or vomiting after eating an excessive amount of avocado (which can happen after eating an excessive amount of any high fat food). So, after removing the pit and skin, go ahead and give your dog a slice of avocado. But keep the large party-size bowl of guacamole out of your dog's reach to avoid over consumption.

Other Foods

Here are some other nutritious foods you can feed your dog:

- Eggs (raw or cooked)
- Fish
- Raw milk. Raw goat's milk is especially nutritious for dogs.
- Plain whole milk yogurt and kefir
- Kelp powder in small amounts (good source of iodine)
- Seeds in small amounts (most are not digestible unless ground or sprouted)
 - Pumpkin seeds
 - Flax seeds
 - Sunflower seeds
 - Chia seeds
- Grains and legumes (beans) do not provide much nutrition for dogs unless they are sprouted. Sprouted grains and legumes can be fed to your dog like vegetables.
- Healthy table scraps. Yes, I said table scraps, but make sure they are healthy. Foods and drinks that are high in refined sugar, caffeine, salt, and/or alcohol are not healthy choices for dogs. However, a little salt is okay.
- Caution: No chocolate or xylitol (a type of sweetener found in many foods and sugar free candies) because these are toxic.

Variety and Avoiding Food Intolerances

There are a couple reasons why variety is better than eating the same thing every day. First, let me introduce you to the gut microbiome. The gut microbiome is the population of different kinds of microorganisms, such as bacteria, that live in the digestive system. Both good and bad microorganisms exist, and a healthy microbiome will have a wide variety of good ones to keep the bad ones in check. Dogs with a very diverse microbiome tend to live healthier longer lives than dogs with little diversity. The more variety in the types of foods eaten, the more diverse the microbiome, and therefore, the healthier the dog.

Second, if you feed your dog the same food or supplement every single day you risk your dog developing an intolerance to that food or supplement. For example, some dogs fed chicken every day for an extended period of time will be fine while other dogs will start to show some kind of allergy like symptom(s). This can occur with fresh or processed food (such as dry kibble or canned dog food). But switching between different brands or formulas of processed food is more likely to cause digestive upset than switching between different fresh food meals. This is because processed food is more difficult to digest. Once accustomed to fresh food, nearly all dogs have no problem switching between different meats, veggies, and other foods just like humans typically do every day.

So I recommend, after feeding your dog the same food and/or supplement for up to 7 days in a row, switch to something else for up to 7 days, then switch again. In other words, rotate through different foods and supplements. One exception is if your dog takes any supplement for a specific medical condition: be sure to give that supplement to them for however long they need it. Another exception is when you first transition your dog to raw food: for dog's who are prone to tummy troubles after eating new foods, limit variety and stick with the same fresh foods until their digestive system adjusts. Then gradually introduce more variety.

Note: "up to 7 days" is not a hard rule, many dogs will be fine with longer periods of time. Just know, the longer a dog is fed the same thing every day, the higher the risk of developing an intolerance.

Supplements

In a diet centered on raw meaty bones, supplements have a range of effects. Some are beneficial, some are harmful, none are mandatory. If you wish to use a supplement, carefully research it. And keep in mind, nutrients are best when they come from whole foods; isolated nutrients can unbalance your dog's diet.

Here's one nutrient worth supplementing for most dogs.

Omega 3 Essential Fatty Acids

Since grain is cheaper than pastureland, most meat products in the USA are from grain-fed animals. While fat from grass-fed animals has an excellent amount omega 3, fat from grain-fed animals has enough for a dog to survive, but not enough for optimal health. If your dog's raw meaty bones come from grain-fed animals here's how to add more omega 3 to your dog's diet:

- **Fish (raw, cooked, or canned in water)**
 - Feed your dog about 1 ounce of fatty fish per pound of meat and bone. This can work out to:
 - 1 meal of fish per week if your dog is fed 1-2 meals per day.
 - 2 meals of fish per week if your dog/puppy is fed 3-4 meals per day.
 - Or small amounts of fish several times a week.
 - I don't recommend fish canned in oil because the oils most commonly used are high in omega 6 essential fatty acids. Extra omega 6 increases the amount of omega 3 the body requires. Thus, fish canned in oil does not make a good omega 3 supplement.
 - To avoid high levels of heavy metals, feed your dog only fish low on the food chain such as sardines, anchovies, smelt, herring, and mackerel (but not king mackerel). Avoid tuna and fish at the top of the food chain as these fish have higher levels of heavy metals and other toxins.
 - Wild caught fish tend to have higher nutrient levels (including omega 3 and vitamin D) than farm raised fish. So, when feeding your dog fish for supplemental purposes, wild caught fish is best.
 - To reduce the risk of parasites in raw fish, freeze the fish at -4 degrees Fahrenheit or below for at least 7 days prior to feeding your dog the fish raw. Alternatively, you can thoroughly cook fish to kill parasites.
 - Pacific salmon and trout can be infected with a parasitic fluke (*Nanophyetus salmincola*) which can be infected with a species of bacteria called *Neorickettsia helminthoeca*. The fluke is of little concern to dogs, but the bacteria can cause a potentially fatal disease called "salmon poisoning". Freezing can kill parasites but bacteria can still

survive. So to be safe, cook salmon and trout, if they're from the Pacific.

- **Other Omega 3 Supplements**

- Phytoplankton
- Fermented fish stock
- Fish oil: Not recommended.
 - Quickly turns rancid, often before reaching store shelves. Rancid oil is harmful to your dog's health.

If you are feeding your dog grain-fed meat, try to keep the fat content in the meat at around 10% (no more than 20%). Fat is an important nutrient, but grain-fed meats tend to have too much of the wrong balance of omega 6 to omega 3 fat. Grass-fed and wild meats tend to be naturally lean and contain a healthier balance of fat.

Getting Started

There are different methods to transition your dog onto a raw diet.

- **Simple switch:** One day your dog eats their old diet, the next they start their new diet, sometimes, for adult dogs, with a day of no food in between to help give their digestive system a reset. But always provide water and don't withhold food from puppies for more than 12 hours.
- **Slow switch:** Gradually reduce the old food and increase the new food over many days. This is typically how dogs are switched from one processed food to another and can work for switching to raw as well. If your dog vomits after eating a meal with a mix of both kibble and raw, try feeding your dog kibble and raw in separate meals or use the simple switch method.

No one seems to be able to agree on which one is best. So, choose whichever you prefer.

Regardless of which method you use, many dogs transition with no problems. Nevertheless, some experience a temporary tummy upset until their digestive system gets used to the new food. This is because the microbiome in their digestive system becomes tuned to the diet they used to. Then, when new foods are introduced, the microbiome needs time to adjust. Until it does, the new food may not get digested as well as it could. How long this takes depends on the health and diversity of the dog's microbiome. If your dog does not at first digest their new food well, they may simply need time to adjust. However, there are a few things you can do to minimize this type of tummy upset.

Preventing Tummy Upset

First, start giving your dog probiotics and vegetables before switching the rest of their diet. This can help to strengthen the dog's microbiome. Then, while continuing the same probiotics and veggies, begin the new diet with raw meaty bones and organs from only one species (such as chicken, turkey, or rabbit). Continue this limited variety for about a week or until your dog's had no digestive problems for a few days. Then gradually add variety.

What To Do With Picky Eaters

Right from the start, many dogs instinctually love raw food, while picky dogs may refuse to eat something so different. There are a few things you can do to encourage picky eaters to try new foods.

When you offer your dog new food and they don't eat it, take it away and try again later. But don't give them the food they want. Let them get hungry. Healthy dogs don't starve themselves; if they're hungry enough, they'll eat whatever you have to

give them. When they do, be careful not to over feed them. In fact, give them a little less than you think they should eat. Overeating can cause digestive discomfort and, if the dog associates feeling sick with the food they ate, they're unlikely to want to eat it again.

Warm food has a stronger scent and can be more enticing to a hesitant dog. So, for very picky eaters, you can try switching to fresh cooked food. Then gradually reduce the amount of cooking for each meal until the dog is eating the food raw. Just remember dogs should not eat cooked bones. Thus, if your dog eats cooked food for more than a week, be sure to add a mineral supplement formulated for home cooked diets.

How Much to Feed Your Dog

Many factors influence how much total food a dog needs per day. Young dogs need more than old dogs. Small dogs generally need more per pound of body weight than large dogs. Active dogs need more than couch potatoes. In other words, there is no chart that will tell you what amount of food is ideal for your dog. Instead, you need to adjust their quantity of food based on their body condition.

If your dog has a healthy body condition, they will have a waist. You should be able to easily feel their ribs by applying light pressure to their sides, but you should not be able to easily count their ribs just by looking at them. If you can see each rib, they need more food. On the other hand, if you can't easily feel their ribs and/or their waist is as wide or wider than their chest, they're getting too much food.

Puppies need plenty of food to grow. But, regardless of what type of diet, puppies should not be fat and "rolly polly" in appearance, or they may grow too fast and develop problems as a result. When in doubt, check with your vet. Also, if your puppy looks like they have a pot belly, they may have intestinal worms. So, ask your vet to run a fecal test. The remedy for a "wormy belly" is a dewormer, not reduced food.

It's especially important to not over feed your dog new foods, as this alone can cause an upset tummy. So, start feeding your dog a little less than what you think they need. Then, after your dog has had no problems with the new food for a few days, feed them their full portion and adjust the amount as needed.

If you have absolutely no idea how much food to give your dog, then I'll give you an idea of where you can start, but always adjust according to the condition of your dog's body!

For your adult dog, start by feeding them 2-3% of their ideal body weight daily divided into however many meals you feed your dog per day. Then watch their body condition and adjust as needed. Your dog could end up needing anywhere between 1-6% (maybe even up to 10%) of their body weight in food daily.

Puppies can be fed around 2-3% of their expected adult weight. If you don't know how big your puppy will get, you can use the list below:

Puppy's age	Amount of food based on current body weight
2 months	10%
3 months	9%
4 months	8%

5 months	7%
6 months	6%
7 months	5%
8 months	4%
9 to 12 months	3%

These percentages are very general recommendations and only to be used as a possible place to start. Small breed puppies may need more while large breed puppies may need less. Always adjust the amount of food based on the puppy's body condition.

The quantity of food your dog needs per day should be divided into meals. Puppies under 6 months of age should eat at least 3 meals a day. Puppies 6 to 12 months should eat 2 or 3 meals per day. Dogs at least a year old can eat 1 or more meals per day.

Some people fast their adult dogs one day each week. This can be great for giving your dog's digestive system rest and keeping them healthy. If you do so, your dog should still eat about the same amount each week just divided over 6 days instead of 7 days. Note: Do not withhold food from growing puppies for more than 12 hours.

Where to Get Ingredients

Specific places to get your ingredients depends on what's available where you live, but some ideas are:

- Grocery stores
- Meat markets
- Butchers
- Local farms
- Farmers markets
- Slaughterhouses
- Online orders
- Pet stores
- Your own garden

Here is an example shopping list to help you get started:

- Raw meaty bones
- Organ meats (as much variety as you can find)
- Vegetables
- Fish (raw or canned in water)
- Additional variety (optional)
 - Fruit
 - Eggs
 - Raw goats milk (look for in small pet stores or directly from a farm. Raw milk is not sold in grocery stores.)
 - Yogurt or kefir
 - Recreational bones
 - Boneless meat
- Caution: No chocolate, xylitol, or grapes. And no more than small amounts (if any) of onions, garlic, leeks, chives, and scallions.

Raw Food Safety

While dogs are designed to handle potential pathogens in fresh raw meat, we humans are not; after handling raw meat, wash your hands and any dishes you used with soap and hot water. Also, the surfaces you used, too large to wash in a sink, need sanitized. This is no different than what you should do when cooking meat for yourself.

Conclusion

In summary, feeding your dog a healthy homemade diet is as easy as...

- Feeding them raw meaty bones (about half of the total diet or use the cheat sheet I provided)
- The remainder of the diet should include:
 - Organ meats
 - Vegetables
 - And may include other healthy foods
- For best health, remember variety, variety, variety

That concludes the basics. If you've read this whole thing, congratulations! You now have the knowledge to make a healthy homemade diet with balanced nutrition for dogs!

Beyond the Basics

Once you get your dog started on fresh raw food, you can start to customize the diet to your individual dog, if you so choose. You can do this by observing your dog. Does he feel best with more or less organs? What about more or less vegetables? Some things you'll discover simply through experience. Maybe try a little of some new foods like sauerkraut or chia seeds. If you have time, you could read books and articles to help you learn how to optimize your dog's diet. Always be open to learning more and enjoy life with your precious canine!

Recommended Reading

www.dogsnaturallymagazine.com – Lots of great info on raw dog food and many other natural dog related topics.

Give Your Dog a Bone by Dr. Ian Billinghurst – Here in America no one is alive who can tell what it was like to feed dogs before commercial pet food became the norm. But commercial pet food did not become popular in Australia until about the 1960s. Prior to attending vet school, Australian veterinarian Dr. Billinghurst, fed his dogs bones and food scraps. It was not until after his veterinary education taught him that scientifically formulated commercial food was best, that he started to feed his own dogs processed food. He also started asking his clients what they fed their dogs, and in doing so, heard about a variety of homemade diets in addition to commercial foods. After a couple years, his own previously healthy dogs started to have the same health problems common in his client's dogs. And after learning what his client's dogs ate, he realized the healthiest dogs were not the dogs eating commercial dog food. He also learned which homemade diets made dogs healthy and which made dogs sick. This book tells of his findings in an easy to read, often entertaining manner. The cartoon pictures found throughout this book are delightfully comical. But, in my opinion, the best thing about this book is that the dietary recommendations are based on real life results!

Raw and Natural Nutrition for Dogs, Revised Edition: The Definitive Guide to Homemade Meals by Lew Olson – This book tells of the history of the pet food industry, how to feed dogs a raw diet, and then makes suggestions on how to customize a raw diet for dogs with certain health conditions.

Dr Becker's Real Food for Healthy Dogs and Cats: Simple Homemade Food by Karen Becker DVM and Beth Taylor – This book provides recipes and a rotation plan nutritionally analyzed to comply with nutrient standards established for processed pet food. While these standards are very important for making processed pet food, I don't like to rely on these standards for a fresh food diet, because they do not take bioavailability of nutrients into consideration (the bioavailability of fresh food is far better than the poor bioavailability of processed food with artificial supplements). But if you want your dog (or cat) to eat a homemade diet that conforms to common nutrient standards, this book can tell you how.