

NUTRITION

101

For those interested in holistic pet nutrition, the following resources provide valuable information:

Books:

- The Forever Dog by Dr. Karen Becker & Rodney Habib
- Feeding Dogs by Dr. Connor Brady
- Food Pets Die For by Ann Martin

Carnivores at Heart

Dogs descended from wolves. Despite domestication altering their appearance, their physiology remains largely unchanged. Their jaws, teeth, highly acidic stomachs, and short digestive tracts are designed to consume a meat-based diet. Carbohydrates are not a biological necessity for dogs, though small amounts of raw or cooked fruits and vegetables can offer benefits. Cats are obligate carnivores, requiring a diet entirely composed of meat. When selecting food for your pets, ensure it has a high meat content to meet these needs.

The Role of Bones

Raw bones are a key element in the natural diets of dogs and cats, supplying vital nutrients like calcium, phosphorus, collagen, amino acids, and trace minerals. For dogs, chewing bones relieves stress, strengthens jaws, and cleans teeth. Cats benefit from smaller options like chicken wings or quail bones, which also encourage natural predatory behavior.

Always use raw bones, as cooked ones can splinter and cause injury. Match the bone to your pet's size and chewing style. Supervise to prevent choking or overconsumption, especially when introducing bones.

The Importance of Variety

Optimal health depends on a varied diet rich in quality ingredients. Different meats provide distinct profiles of protein, fat, amino acids, vitamins, and minerals, each contributing uniquely to a pet's wellbeing. For instance, beef is rich in iron and B vitamins, while fish offers omega-3 fatty acids for skin and coat health. Rotating food sources helps ensure pets receive a comprehensive range of nutrients over time, preventing deficiencies that might arise from a static diet. This approach also supports digestive resilience by exposing the gut to diverse proteins and fats, potentially reducing food sensitivities. Variety can even enhance a pet's enjoyment of meals, encouraging appetite and engagement.

METRO BEAT

THE BASICS



Food For Thought

Imagine going to the grocery store to shop the aisles of dry, processed “people kibble”. The selections are labeled “100% Complete and Balanced” to meet all your nutritional needs. You are to choose a package and then eat this, and nothing else, for every meal, every day for the rest of your life. Do you think you’ll enjoy optimal health and vitality? Would you not crave some real food?

Think Outside the Bag

Dogs have been domesticated for over 40,000 years, but kibble emerged as a popular option only after World War II. It was designed for convenience rather than nutritional superiority. North America leads in kibble consumption, correlating with elevated rates of pet health issues such as obesity, diabetes, thyroid disorders, and cancer—conditions once rare amongst dogs and cats.

Fruits and Vegetables

Dogs and cats have no physiological need for carbohydrates, yet including small amounts of plant matter can benefit dogs in particular. Suitable options include most fruits and vegetables. We recommend serving them lightly cooked for better digestibility as dogs cannot breakdown cellulose. Toxic items like grapes, raisins, and onions must be avoided. Each pet's preferences vary, so experimenting with options like broccoli or cantaloupe can reveal surprising favorites.

Canned pumpkin is rich in nutrients that can help regulate digestion, addressing both constipation and diarrhea.

Enzymes and Probiotics

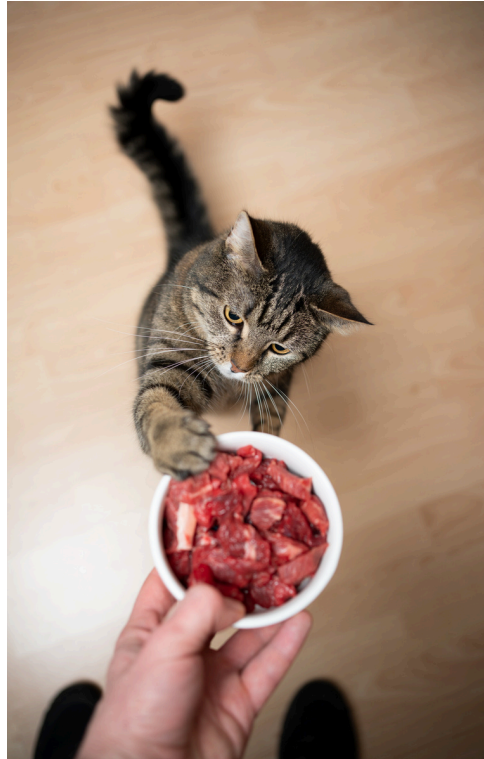
Pets today face a challenging environment, with their immune systems stressed by processed foods, pesticides, and environmental toxins. Given that 70-80% of the immune system resides in the gut, bolstering digestive health is a critical strategy for enhancing overall immunity. Supplements like digestive enzymes and probiotics can play a significant role by aiding nutrient absorption and fostering a balanced gut microbiome. Even pets on raw diets may benefit, particularly if they exhibit sensitivities or digestive issues. Consult our knowledgeable staff to determine the most suitable supplement for your pet's specific needs.



The Importance of Moisture

In the wild, carnivores consume prey with high moisture content, not dry food. Kibble, while practical and cost-effective, deviates from this natural model. For comparison, a human eating only dry crackers would require significant water intake to compensate. Despite ample water access, this approach strains organs and digestion over time. Research from holistic veterinarians links dry diets in cats to conditions like bladder stones, kidney issues, obesity, diabetes, and feline lower urinary tract disease (FLUTD). Reducing carbohydrate-rich foods can also simplify weight management.

If using kibble, enhance it with high-quality raw, canned, or fresh foods to improve hydration and nutrition.



Biologically Appropriate Diets

Dogs and cats benefit from a biologically appropriate diet because it matches their natural nutritional requirements as carnivores. For dogs, this means a diet primarily composed of animal proteins and fats. Cats also depend on meat-based diets to obtain critical nutrients like taurine. Diets high in processed ingredients or plant matter may contribute to nutritional gaps, weight gain, or long-term health issues, while biologically appropriate options, often raw or minimally processed, help maintain immune function, coat condition, and overall longevity by aligning with their physiological design.

Not all raw-fed food is equal. Quality, sourcing, and nutritional balance of the ingredients can vary significantly, impacting its effectiveness in meeting a dog or cat's dietary needs. High-quality raw food from reputable sources uses human-grade, ethically sourced meats with clear origins, ensuring safety and nutrient density.

Benefits of Feeding a High Quality Raw Food

- Improved health, energy & longevity [?](#)
- Healthy, clean teeth & gums [?](#)
- Relief from allergies & G.I. issues [?](#)
- Increased immunity [?](#)
- Less shedding [?](#)
- No breath & body odour [?](#)
- Improved weight control & musculature
- Very low stool volume
- Shiny coat & healthy skin