



Berkshire's Dogs on Raw

Beginners quick guide to
raw feeding



WHY RAW FEED YOUR DOG?

Dogs are descended from wolves and their internal organs and functions remain the same as their distant ancestor. Raw feeding aims to give dogs a diet that is appropriate to their digestive systems and as close as possible to what they might have eaten as wild animals. Their low stomach pH means they are able to break down raw meat and bone easily. In fact, a dog's digestion is mainly facilitated by its large, expandable stomach filled with strong acids to break down flesh and bone... and anything else they happen to pick up. The truth is, with stomach acid like this it's very hard for a dog to get food poisoning!

Dogs are carnivorous scavengers and their jaws do not move from side to side, meaning they can't grind food. So, they simply swallow it. We all worry that our dogs simply 'wolf' down their food, but it's simply the way they are designed.

PROCESSED DOG FOOD - REVEALED!

We now know that processed convenience foods are not healthy for humans, so why would it be different for our dogs?

We in general have become used to convenience foods and unfortunately, we have passed this 'convenience' on to our pets. A bag of kibble bought from the supermarket can last a month and we are led to believe it is good for our dog, because this is what we have been told by the manufacturers advertising claims.

However, more and more dogs are getting cancer and autoimmune disorders than ever before, forcing many dog owners to take a hard, look at the pet food industry and the products they supply.

Generally processed dog food is high-carb and low animal protein. It is full of fillers, sugars and 'meat derivatives' (which basically means manufacturers do not have to specify where the meat comes from).



Natural vitamins are destroyed by the cooking process and have to be replaced with chemically produced 'nutrients' along with colouring, preservatives and binders to make a finished 'food' product.

Most dry commercial pet foods contain a high percentage of grain because the carbohydrates are needed to hold the food together. A dog does not need or can properly digest this amount of carbohydrates. Hence why dogs on a commercial diet have much bigger stools than those fed on a raw diet - what goes in, must come out!

Processed pet foods are certainly not the type of thing your dog would have eaten in the wild. By choosing a raw diet you have made the best feeding choice for your dog. This biologically appropriate diet is the closest thing to what a dog would eat in the wild - quite simply, it's what they are designed to eat.

BENEFITS TO RAW FEEDING:

There are many health benefits that come with a raw diet. Some of the most obvious benefits include:

Improved digestion - your dog will digest the majority of the food they eat, it's easier and more efficient. Also, resulting in smaller and less smelly poos that biodegrade quickly.

Calmer & happier - Less hyperactive; there are no added sugar and additives in natural raw food!

Better weight management - dogs tend not to overeat on raw and without the sugars in their diet, they are less inclined to put on weight.

Healthier skin and coat - nutrients that they'll obtain from raw food will transfer to their coats, ensuring that they shine and smell considerably better.

Reduced allergy symptoms - raw food does not contain wheat or grain and contain no chemicals or preservatives - all of which can contribute to allergies!



Healthier teeth and gums - there is no starchy ingredients which cause tartar buildup and eventually dental disease. Crunching and grinding bones naturally scrapes and removes plaque and tartar from their teeth

MAKING THE SWITCH

Adopting a new way of feeding will take more commitment, than just opening a can of food. Though as mentioned, the benefits are well worth it!

Here are some suggestions to make the transition easier:

Storage:

Raw food from us will come frozen, so you will need to consider freezer storage space. Freezing is great - it keeps the nutritional value. The temperature is cold enough to kill off any harmful parasites and is also nature's natural preserver - hence no preservatives required.

If you have a small dog, you may get away with dedicating a freezer drawer for your dog, especially with taking advantage of our small minimum delivery requirement we have at Berkshire's Dogs on Raw.

If you have a larger dog, you may need to consider investing in a separate freezer. This need not be expensive as there are some bargains to be had second-hand!

What to feed:



A raw diet does not need to be gradually introduced. You can do a complete swap - dry/canned one day, raw the next. It is not recommended to mix kibble with raw, as this may upset the digestive system.

To start feed one protein source (like chicken), for a week. Then next week introduce a new meat (like beef), combine for a week and use this method to introduce other things like lamb, rabbit, etc.

You will become an expert at looking at dog poo, as this is the best way of telling how your dog is doing. The perfect poo can vary in colour but should be like a small kickable non stick pellet.

For many starting out it can make a lot of sense to start with complete minces with everything already in it. This is an easy option while you gain confidence to take the DIY approach.

So, what is a well-balanced diet? With a DIY approach you want to aim for a good varied diet. This does not have to be achieved with every meal and can be over several days. The more variety, the better the balance and the less likely for your dog missing out on something. We use the ratio 80% meat, 10% bone & 10% offal (offal must contain 5% liver. This is essential). Examples of things that are counted towards 80% meat are: heart, tongue, cheek, skirt, off cuts, lung, diaphragm, trachea, gizzards, green tripe, brisket, stewing meat, fillets. Your 10% offal include 5% liver, then 5% kidney, spleen, brain, testicles or pancreas.

With bone it's better to start slightly lower and build up, then feed too much. You will know if you feed too much bone as poo becomes very hard and chalky or the dog is straining. If this happens skip a bone meal for a boneless meal such as tripe. If your dog is struggling with constipation, then feed offal or heart - this gets the bowels moving. Many do not recommend feeding weight-bearing bones such as legs and knuckles. These are very hard bones, especially of bigger animals and can break teeth and splinter.

Always remember is that bones must always be uncooked, NEVER cooked. A cooked bone can easily shatter or splinter and if swallowed may lodge in the throat or stomach.

You can feed pretty much any meat; chicken, turkey, lamb, goat, pork, beef, venison, rabbit, duck, pheasant, wood pigeon, kangaroo, fish etc.



Many people like to add vegetables and/or fruit to their working dog's raw diet. This does no harm, but is not necessary. Dogs are unable to break down the cell walls in veg. Therefore, it must be grated/blended to break these down and should be fed raw to allow dogs to get maximum nutrition from them.

Veg can be especially useful as a filler for dogs who need to lose weight as it is lower calorie than meat (but we'd suggest no more than 20%). A raw vegetable treat like a carrot or banana goes down well with many dogs and is certainly better than a processed treat.

Avoid onions, avocado, cherries, mushrooms, raw and green potato, grapes and raisins.

Top tip; look at ALL aspects of your dog's diet when switching to raw. Many owners start feeding raw without realising their dog's treats have wheat and sugar. For treats or training aids you can for example use dried liver, chicken or fish skins - all completely natural and containing 100% meat or fish.

How much to feed:

Adult dogs - As a rule, raw is fed at 2-3% of the ideal adult weight. So, for example, a dog that weighs 10kg should be fed between 200g-300g per day. Though there are other factors to consider such as age and activity levels. For example, an active working dog will require more than an older inactive dog. Just keep an eye on their weight and make the necessary adjustments.

If you are used to processed pet food with extra fillers, these quantities may seem low. But, with raw food they will digest much more and therefore there will be less poo at the other end!

Puppies - If you know your puppies expected adult weight, then feed 3% of that. If not, then:

2 - 4 months: 10 - 8% of their body weight



(at 4 months drop down to two meals a day)

4 - 6 months: 8 - 6% of their body weight

6 - 8 months: 6 - 4% of their body weight

8 - 12 months: 4 - 3% of their body weight

12 + months: 2-3% of their body weight

Remember, this is as a guide. Keep an eye on your dog and adjust up or down as needed.

You can always check out our raw food calculator on our home page!

YOUR ROUTINE

You'll soon establish a routine of defrosting and feeding and learn how fast the food defrosts. For bigger dogs you may take out a pack one day and feed it the next. With very small dogs, a pack might last several days and it may be best defrosting half a pack at a time.

If you do forget to defrost the food simply put a pack in a bowl of warm water. Never be tempted to microwave it as the bone can harden.

LASTLY

We all worry when we start, whether what we feed is a balanced diet. It is always handy to have a book you refer to. There are also some amazing Facebook groups to help and support you on your journey. If you opt for a DIY diet, think balance over time – do a week's view and work from there, but aim for the ratio mentioned above. You don't need to fit everything in a bowl.

If you have any questions, then please check the FAQ on our website

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