

Thoughts on Dog Food

BARF (Raw Food) Diet

We feed our dogs a partially BARF diet. For those of you who are not familiar with the term, BARF stands for Biologically Appropriate Raw Food.

I had a dog who had so many food allergies that typical dog food was not an option for her. For a long time I cooked her meals... she ate better than the humans in my home! While we ate pizza, she dined on cooked hamburger or fish and sweet potato, oatmeal, cottage cheese, and pureed veggies. What a job it was to feed her!!!

Several years later, I read about the raw food diet. While feeding a dog BONES went against everything I had been taught growing up; it also made sense once I read the reasoning behind this feeding plan. (NOTE: Bones are only safe when NOT COOKED!)

I won't review all the information I read here. But here are a few facts: The dog's digestive system has not evolved from its original design. That design accounts for dogs to rip and tear prey, and to consume bones, meat, organs, and whatever vegetable matter is in the stomach/intestines of the animal they were eating. Another important fact: dogs are not designed to digest mostly grain/carbohydrates... and dry kibble feeds are mostly grain/carbohydrates.

Dogs can exist on these dry food diets, but I liken it to a child living on sugary cereal.... not optimal for health!

The drawbacks to a BARF diet are trying to vary the content of meals, and providing a balance of nutrients, and the possibilities of issues from salmonella/bacteria. While some experts claim salmonella/bacteria is not a risk, I have also read studies that show salmonella present in the food and stool of dogs on BARF diet.

I encourage anyone interested to read about the BARF diet. It is an adjustment to get accustomed to defrosting raw food and feeding a variety of foods to your dog. Certainly, dry kibble is easier! The cost does not have to be more than premium kibble food, if you buy in bulk and on sale.

I tell people to read, get educated, make your own decisions about how far to go with this. I don't appreciate the cult like fanaticism that some devotees of this form of feeding/raising advocate. It is not my intent to attack or alienate those who are not comfortable with this choice.

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Prepared Dog Food (Kibble)

Not everyone wants to feed their dogs raw or home made diet. We realize this, and we raise our puppies on both kibble & home made, to make the adjustment easier on the puppies when they go to their new homes.

We use Blue Buffalo chicken/rice Puppy formula for our litters. Our dogs have done very well on this food. (Stools are formed, coats are shiny, dogs have enough weight on.) I have observed that our dogs do better on the chicken based kibble than on bison or beef based kibble.

When shopping for a high quality food, it is important to check the ingredient listing on the back of the bag. There are many good foods out there, and I have tried several. For us, Blue Buffalo has proven to agree with all of our dogs. For adults, we like Blue Wilderness or Blue Buffalo Adult. In the past, some of our dog did well on Solid gold Wolf Cub/Wolf King. Others did better on Wellness, or Timberwolf lamb/apples, or Taste of the Wild salmon. Since our dogs frequently play musical bowls, it is easier for us if they are all eating one food.

What to look for? Are the first ingredients whole foods, protein sources or meals/ fillers? I like to see first ingredients is chicken, (or whatever the protein source is).

Check the levels of Protein/Fat/Fiber. Are the levels comparable to what puppy is on now? Some very good foods, especially grain free foods such as Wellness Core or Innova Evo or Solid Gold Barking at the Moon are not good for puppies. The protein level is too high, and the food isn't balanced for growing pups.

Here is a link to a website that rates dog foods. I don't think this system is the end all/ answer all, but you might find it helpful to compare common ingredients in popular foods:

www.dogfoodanalysis.com



Dogs With Food Allergies

Just like people, some dogs have food allergies. How do you know if your dogs has this problem? Tell tale signs are itching between toes, licking and chewing at feet, chronic ear discharge and itchy ears, dull coat, itchy skin, and sometimes hives and chronic diarrhea or unformed stool.

Other than allergy testing your dog (a simple but expensive blood test will tell you what your dog is allergic to), you can try to isolate food allergies by switching to a limited ingredient food. Fish and Sweet Potato is my favorite, but there are also Venison and Potato, Duck and potato, Prescription Diets, and even Vegetarian diets.

You will need to try a new food for 4-6 weeks before seeing true results.