

Raw meaty bones: Essential food and medicine for the inner wolf

‘Follow the maker’s instructions’ — sound advice whether we are refuelling our motorcycle, family car or executive jet. We need trouble free transport. We don’t want endless trips to the repair shop and we don’t want to risk our safety or the safety of others.

Alas when it comes to providing the every day fuel (food) for our dogs — modified wolves — we’re told by pet food companies and vets to feed grain based concoctions or pulverised pap out of a can. How did we stray so far from Nature’s teachings and accept the recommendations of junk food makers instead? How come we expect our working dogs to perform good work on artificial fuel? And when our dogs suffer from a litany of modern ailments why do we not first question the artificial diet?

I must admit that for the first fifteen years of my working life I gave little or no thought to the food my canine patients were required to eat. As a graduate of the Royal Veterinary College, University of London I was trained to diagnose disease (mostly end stage disease) and provide pharmaceutical treatments. Insofar as diet was mentioned we veterinary students were told to read the labels on the can or packet. Yes, back in the 1970s the veterinary profession allied itself with the makers of junk pet foods and these days the situation is many times worse.

Fortunately for me and my patients I eventually woke up. It was the 1980s and veterinary dentistry was the new profit centre for vets. ‘Buy the latest vet dental equipment and make a fortune’ we were advised. ‘Book your patients in for six monthly dental prophylaxis under general anaesthesia.’ ‘You can also profit from selling pet tooth brushes, toothpaste and special dental diets.’

But a group of vets in Sydney, Australia, subsequently known as the Raw Meaty Bones Lobby, were sceptical. Why don’t wolves in the wild suffer from rotting teeth and gums? I’d seen plenty of dead foxes and none ever suffered from bad teeth and gums. And when I worked in the zoo our lions, tigers and other carnivores never needed dental attention. There is one overriding reason wild animals have healthy mouths: The diets they pursue and the diets responsible zoo keepers provide are based on whole carcasses of raw meaty bones. Yes, it’s the act of ripping and tearing, gnawing, squeegeeing and flossing on raw meaty bones that keeps carnivores’ teeth and gums in good condition.

In hindsight we can see that numerous other health benefits flowed from our passion for raw meaty bones. When owners stopped feeding the grain based junk foods they straight away ceased doing harm. And the nutrient profile in raw meaty bones, whilst not identical to whole carcasses, is a good next best option. Consequently the proteins, fats, minerals, vitamins and trace elements passing down the canine digestive tract closely match the Maker’s instructions.

For dogs fed junk food, the digestive system and the repair and maintenance systems (liver, kidneys and immune system) are required to work 24/7 attempting to

compensate for the wrong food/fuel. But once the right fuel/food passes down the digestive tract everything changes for the better. ‘Like a puppy again’ say delighted owners. Dog trainers tell how ‘difficult’ dogs become contented and more easily trained when changed over to a raw meaty bones diet.

Dogs of all ages and breeds experience an improvement in general health. Even a dog’s sense of smell improves when its teeth are cleaned — essential information for dogs and their handlers in the front line of police, military and customs work.

Having read this far, you may be wondering: What’s the catch? Are there risks to feeding the wolf within? Now after twenty years of witnessing the sometimes miraculous cures of dogs fed a raw meaty bones diet, I prefer to think of raw meaty bones as both *food and medicine* for carnivores. As a medicine, raw meaty bones provide the most gentle, most effective, strongest medicine ever discovered. Raw meaty bones *cure* numerous modern dog diseases and *prevent* a host more.

However, as with any medicine raw meaty bones must be handled and stored with care. In the next edition we’ll take a look at some of the myths and realities surrounding the feeding of raw meaty bones. Meanwhile please bone up on the diet info in the accompanying box.

EDITOR SUGGEST PUT THE FOLLOWING IN A BOX OR SIMILAR

Raw Meaty Bones for the Inner Wolf

The diet is easy, economical and efficient. Dogs thrive and work to full potential.

- Fresh water constantly available.
- Raw meaty bones (or carcasses if available) should form the bulk of the diet.
- Table scraps both cooked and raw (grate or liquidise vegetables, *discard cooked bones*).

Puppies

From about three weeks of age puppies start to take an interest in what their mother is eating. By six weeks of age they can eat chicken carcasses, rabbits and fish.

During the brief interval between three and six weeks of age you can provide minced chicken, chicken carcasses or similar for young animals (as well as access to larger pieces that encourage ripping and tearing). This is akin to the part-digested food regurgitated by wild carnivore mothers. Large litters will need more supplementary feeding than small litters.

The meat and bone should be minced together. Meat off the bone can be fed, but only for a short time, until the young animals can eat meat and bone together — usually about six weeks of age.

Between four and six months of age puppies cut their permanent teeth and grow rapidly. At this time they need a plentiful supply of carcasses or raw meaty bones of suitable size.

Puppies tend not to over-eat natural food. Food can be continuously available.

Natural foods suitable for modified wolves

Raw meaty bones

- Chicken and turkey carcasses, after the meat has been removed for human consumption, are economical and suitable for most dogs.
- Poultry by-products include: heads, feet, necks and wings (only for tiny dogs and small puppies)
- Whole fish and fish heads.
- Goat, sheep, calf and deer carcasses can be sawn into large pieces of meat and bone.
- Other by-products include: pigs' trotters, pigs' heads, sheep heads, brisket, tail bones, rib bones.

Whole carcasses

- Rabbits, fish, chickens, quail, hens.

Offal

- Liver, lungs, trachea, hearts, omasums (stomach of ruminants), tripe.

Quality — Quantity — Frequency

Healthy animals living and breeding in the wild depend on the correct *quality* of food in the right *quantity* at a correct *frequency*. They thereby gain an appropriate nutrient intake plus the correct amount of teeth cleaning — animals, unlike humans, 'brush' and 'floss' as they eat.

Quality

Low-fat game animals and fish and birds provide the best source of food for dogs. If using meat from farm animals (cattle, sheep and pigs) avoid excessive fat, or bones that are too large to be eaten.

Dogs are more likely to break their teeth when eating large knuckle bones and bones sawn lengthwise than if eating meat and bone together. Dogs can consume 'ripe' food and will sometimes bury bones for later consumption.

Quantity

Establishing the quantity to feed dogs is more an art than a science. Parents, when feeding a human family, manage this task without the aid of food consumption charts. You can achieve the same good results for your dog by paying attention to activity levels, appetite and body condition.

High activity and big appetite indicate a need for increased food, and vice versa.

Body condition depends on a number of factors. The overall body shape — is it athletic or rotund — and the lustre of the hair coat provide clues. Use your finger tips to assess the elasticity of the skin. Does it have an elastic feel and move readily over the muscles? Do the muscles feel well toned? And how much coverage of the ribs do you detect? This is the best place to check whether your dog is too thin or too fat. By comparing your own rib cage with that of your dog you can obtain a good idea of body condition — both your own and that of your pet.

An approximate food consumption guide, based on raw meaty bones, for the average dog is 15 to 20 percent of body weight in one week or 2 to 3 percent per day. On that basis an 80 pound dog requires up to 16 pounds of carcasses or raw meaty bones weekly. Table scraps should be fed as an extra component of the diet. Please note that these figures are only a guide and relate to adult dogs in a domestic environment.

Pregnant or lactating females, working dogs and growing puppies may need much more food than adult animals of similar body weight.

Wherever possible, feed the meat and bone ration in one large piece requiring much ripping, tearing and gnawing. This makes for contented pets with clean teeth.

Frequency

Wild wolves feed at irregular intervals. In a domestic setting regularity works best and accordingly I suggest that you feed adult dogs once daily. If you live in a hot climate I recommend that you feed your dog in the evening to avoid attracting flies.

On one or two days each week your dog may be fasted — just like animals in the wild. On occasions you may run out of natural food. Don't be tempted to buy artificial food, fast your dog and stock up with natural food the next day. Puppies, sick and underweight dogs should not be fasted (unless on veterinary advice).

Table scraps

Wild wolves eat small amounts of omnivore food, part-digested in liquid form, when they eat the intestines of their prey. Our table scraps, and some fruit and vegetable peelings, are omnivore food which has not been ingested. Providing table scraps do not form too great a proportion of the diet they appear to do no harm and may do some good. I advise an upper limit of one-third scraps for dogs. Liquidising scraps, both cooked and raw, in the kitchen mixer may help to increase their digestibility.

Things to avoid

- Excessive meat off the bone — not balanced.
- Excessive vegetables — not balanced.
- Small pieces of bone — can be swallowed whole and get stuck.
- Cooked bones — get stuck.
- Mineral and vitamin additives — create imbalance.
- Processed food — leads to dental and other diseases.
- Excessive starchy food — associated with bloat.
- Onions, garlic and chocolate — toxic to pets.
- Grapes, raisins, sultanas, currants — toxic to dogs.
- Fruit pits and corn cobs — get stuck.
- Milk — associated with diarrhoea. Animals drink it whether thirsty or not and consequently get fat. Milk sludge sticks to teeth and gums.

Take care

- Old dogs addicted to a processed diet may experience initial difficulty when changed on to a natural diet.
- Dogs with misshapen jaws and dental disease may experience difficulties with a natural diet.
- Create variety. Any nutrients fed to excess can be harmful.
- Liver is an excellent foodstuff but should not be fed more than once weekly.
- Other offal, e.g. ox stomachs, should not exceed 50 percent of the diet.
- Whole fish are an excellent source of food for carnivores, but avoid feeding one species of fish constantly. Some species, e.g. carp, contain an enzyme which destroys thiamine (vitamin B1). Salmon caught on the west coast of North America may carry a toxin responsible for salmon poisoning. Freezing deactivates the toxin.
- Feed dogs for a lifetime of good health. Prevention is better than cure.

Miscellaneous tips

Domestic dogs are wolves in disguise. Feeding them the appropriate wolf diet represents the single most important contribution to their welfare. Establish early contact with a dependable supplier of raw natural wolf food. Buy food in bulk in order to avoid shortages. Package the daily rations separately for ease of feeding. Refrigerated storage space, preferably a freezer, is essential. Raw meaty bones can be fed frozen just like ice cream. Some dogs eat the frozen article; others wait for it to thaw.

Small carcasses, for example rabbits and birds, can be fed frozen and complete with entrails. Larger carcasses should have the entrails removed before freezing.

Take care that dogs do not fight over their food.

Protect children by ensuring that they do not disturb feeding dogs.

Feeding bowls are unnecessary — the food will be dragged across the floor — so feed dogs outside by preference, or on an easily cleaned floor.

For an expanded description of dietary requirements, including the potential hazards, please consult www.rawmeatybones.com and the books *Raw Meaty Bones: Promote Health* and *Work Wonders: Feed your dog raw meaty bones*.