

PETS

CANINE CONVERSATIONS

with Robert Cabral

DOG FOOD OR HUMAN FOOD

What to feed your best friend.

One of the most common questions that I am asked is, “What do you feed your dog?” The answer to that question is quite involved. Just like if I were to ask you, “What do you feed your child?” There isn’t a simple answer, like Alpo. I feed my dog a variety of natural foods and I feel that the food you feed your dog can have serious implications on their lives. Of course there is the anomaly of the dog that was fed the cheap grocery store brand and lived 19 years, that is the exception, not the rule.

For the most part I feed my dog whole foods, which is REAL food. I don’t like kibble because I don’t know what’s in it. There are some great natural ready-made foods available at your local pet store, so it’s not all that complicated. However I’ll start with the home prepared options first. The reason I prefer homemade foods is because I know what’s in it. I start with a natural protein source, I opt for organic beef and chicken as well as organic veggies that I flash boil and then run through the food processor. I also feed grains such as brown rice (organic) as well as oats and others. The big debate currently is Grain free vs. Grains. And the answer to that debate should be judged by how your dog responds to grains. If he likes them, he may thrive on them. There are many benefits to grains in a dog’s diet as well as organic veggies. There are some people who will feed their dogs only meats and those that feed only vegetarian diets. I think a balance is important, as dogs are not solely carnivores, but more omnivores. Dogs will naturally eat grass, which can be very good for them. Most every type of grass is edible and has certain health benefits.

The big thing to consider when dogs eat grass is:

1. Is the dog sick and eating it to make himself throw up? or
2. Is he lacking some basic nutrients?

Creating a balanced meal for your dog is quite simple. Determine how much food your dog needs and balance out the protein to the fiber, veggies and grains. There are countless resources online of how much to feed your dog, but in the end that answer should be determined by you and your dog. Just like two people will respond differently to the same amount of food, so will two dogs. The key thing to consider will be your dog’s energy level and weight. Your dog should be lean and remember, less is more. As long as your dog receives his nutrition there is nothing to worry about if he skips a meal or two. Dogs will naturally fast when they can’t find food, and that fast can be a very beneficial thing for their digestive system as well as the rest of their body and organs. Don’t force a dog to eat if they skip a meal. If you are concerned, see your veterinarian. I regularly fast my dog at least ½ a day per week, some suggest a full day fast.

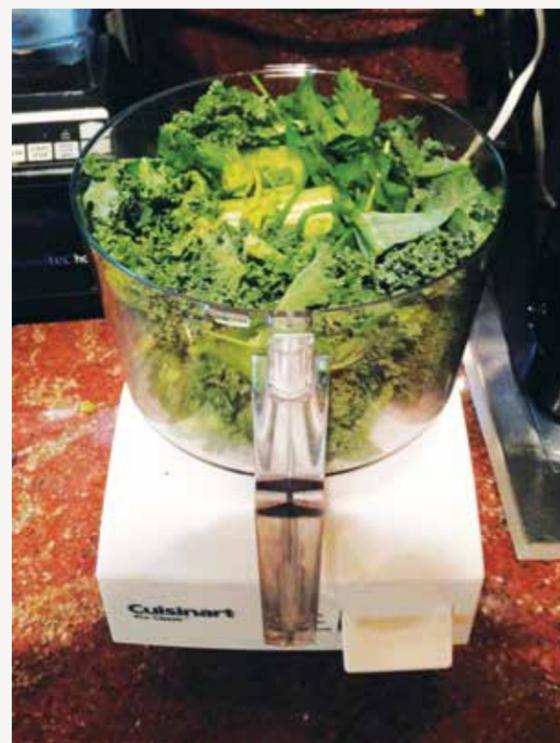
Some of my favorite ingredients for homemade meals include; beef, chicken, sardines, eggs, brown rice, sweet potatoes, kale, broccoli, celery, parsley, spirulina, oats, berries. And remember filtered water is one of the most important things in your dogs diet. I do feed raw meats to my dog because I feel there are benefits to this for my dog. Some people are strongly opposed to that, for these people I recommend cooking their foods. But please research the benefits of raw meats for dogs. Although it will take some extra efforts in cleaning up after your dog, you can be assured that the essential nutrients are not cooked out of your dog’s food. If you are preparing a homemade meal it will be important to add supplements. One of the best brands I’ve found are Dr. Bob’s Daily Dog Health Nuggets, they also offer a great supplement for raw feeding.

As for treats, I recommend things like raw marrowbones, turkey necks, kongs stuffed with almond butter (small amounts) and other natural treats.

In next issue’s column I will address fitness and weight for dogs, so stay tuned for that. As for a list of great dog foods available from pet stores, I recommend a visit to Pacific Coast Pets and look through their foods, read the ingredients. If you don’t know what the ingredient is, move on. For example, by products and meals are things to avoid. Look at the ingredients on foods such as Stella & Chewys, Ziwi Peak, Orijen, Acana, Volhard Nutrition, Honest Kitchen, Primal and others. Remember, if you can buy a 50lb bag of food for \$25, there’s something wrong, because you can’t buy 50lbs worth of food for yourself for \$25. Food is food, and remember, garbage in – garbage out. Dogs on a natural diet poop less, have better coats, have fresher breath, have fewer problems with their teeth and are less likely to develop health issues related to eating junk.

For those of you who know me know that I am an ethical vegetarian, but YES, I do still believe in feeding meat to my dog.

For a list of dog food recipes, visit my website www.blackbeltdogtraining.com



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