

Good Dog Spot: Guide to Dog Food



You Are What You Eat: A Condensed Guide to Dog Food

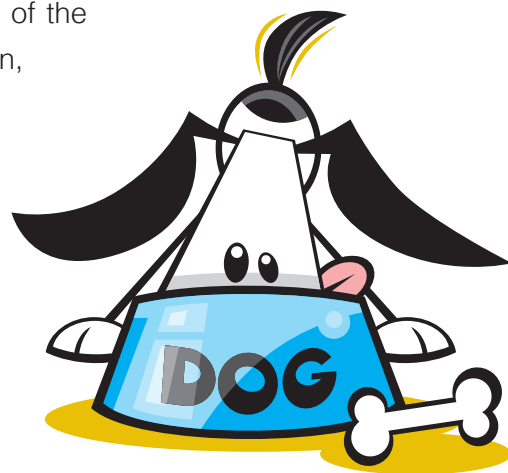
Choosing a food for your dog can be overwhelming! Within the last fifteen years, the pet food industry has experienced explosive growth, particularly those offering a natural, holistic, or super premium diet. There is a rational answer for this: within the last two decades, studies have shown that there is a conclusive link between your dog's health and what they eat. These studies suggest that some canine diseases can be treated by regulating a dog's diet, a fairly radical proposal in it's day. The effect of this is that walking into a pet store and choosing a food for your dog now takes some contemplation. All foods now advertise attractive reasons for why their food is the best for your dog.

Of course, in some cases this also comes with a price. With the escalating number of brands out there, the price of course goes up. But the benefits of feeding a good food will, in the end, make up for this price differential. As we've already stated, a good food can help to alleviate health concerns, saving you money at the vet. You will also generally feed less of a high quality food, since there are no "fillers" like those found in low-quality foods. And, the best one...less waste! A food that has fillers will cause your dog to go to the bathroom often, while a high quality food contains ingredients that are digested and used up by the body.

We have some bad news: there is no conclusive answer to the question "What is the best dog food out there?" The answer to this question takes some research, and the best place to start is with your own dog. Analyze the food that you are already feeding your dog, asses your dog's condition, and start to improve his or her diet with these helpful guidelines.

Good things to look for are...

1. Food that contain lots of a specified protein source in the top of the ingredient list: whole beef (or chicken, turkey, lamb, pork, venison, bison, etc.) or fish (like salmon) as the first ingredient
2. An animal protein meal in a "supporting role", listed somewhere after the fresh meat. Meal is a product made from the protein source's meat (and bone, skin, fat, and connective tissue). It is used to bolster a food's protein levels. Fresh meat contains about 15-25% protein and 65-75% water, while meal contains only 10% water and 65-70% protein.



3. Food that contain whole ingredients, vegetables, or fruits or grains... things like blueberries, cranberries, alfalfa, sweet potato, etc.
4. Production information. Do some research: where is that food made? There are many foods that are high-quality, made with great ingredients, but are produced in a factory that also makes a low-quality food or a food that is frequently involved with recalls involving outbreaks like salmonella.

What you don't want to buy...

1. Meat by-products or poultry by-products: higher value ingredients (like real meat) are processed and stored more carefully (kept clean and cold) than lower cost ingredients (such as by products) by the processors.
2. A "generic" fat source: such as animal fat. This can literally be any fat of animal origin, including using restaurant grease and fats derived from road kill (Yuk!)
3. Added sweeteners: since dogs, like humans, enjoy the taste of sweet foods, sweetener are used to persuade dogs to eat food comprised mainly of grain fragments and containing little healthy animal protein
4. Artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives: we don't like them in our food, why would we feed them to our dogs?
5. Corn anywhere in the ingredient list! Corn is a supplement, and used to cheaply "bulk up" some dogs foods. However, there is no nutritional value and are difficult for the stomach to process in large amounts. Corn breaks down into simple sugars and can, essentially, give your dog a "sugar high" making it harder for him or her to relax or to concentrate.

What does The Good Dog Spot look for in the foods we sell?

It is our mission to inspire trust in pets and their families by offering the best quality services and products. Just like you, we do a lot of research before bringing in a new food. Here are a couple of things that we look for...

1. A local and reputable processing plant: we assure that the plants that process the lines we carry have the strictest of quality checks. NONE of the foods that we carry, or the plants that have processed them, have ever been involved in a recall, assuring the quality and proper handling of the product. Many of them, such as the By Nature line, are even produced regionally. Their plant is only 3 hours away. And the Blue Buffalo Company headquarters are less than 2 hours away.
2. High Quality Ingredients: just like you, we read the ingredients list. We carry a range of different protein sources and formulas, since we know that something that works right for one dog, might not work for the other. But in the end, we know that everything going into the food we stock is guaranteed to be healthy.

Assess and Compare

- If your dog is itchy, look for a limited ingredient food (a single protein and a single carb source, preferable not a grain) that contains none of the ingredients that his or her current food contains.
- If your dog is overweight, look for a food with a lower fat content. Try to replace the carbs with protein sources (ie: stay away from a rice based food, and instead try a grain free, protein and vegetable based food).
- If your dog is too thin, look for a food with a higher fat content.
- If your dog is having digestive problems, try foods with less fat, a different protein source, or no grains, depending on what works for your dog.
- If your dog acts hungry all the time, look for a food with higher fat content and more protein. Or supplement with something healthy, like canned pumpkin or sweet potato.
- If your dog is a picky eater, try rotating different protein sources of the same food (ie: try lamb one month, and chicken the next) or offer foods with different protein sources to see which are most appealing (especially unusual ones like bison or duck).

Making the Switch

Remember to gradually introduce your dog to higher quality foods.

If your dog has been eating grocery store brands (Purina, Iams, Eukanuba, Gravy Train, etc), his stomach is used to a rather bland diet as these brands typically use a corn gluten and wheat gluten formula with added vitamins and minerals. Always remember to gradually introduce the new food over the span of a couple weeks to reduce stomach upset.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ New food + $\frac{3}{4}$ Old food - for 5-6 days. If your dog is having loose stools after this period of time, continue feeding for an additional 3 days
- $\frac{1}{2}$ New Food + $\frac{1}{2}$ Old Food – for 5-6 days. If your dog is having loose stools after this period of time, continue feeding for an additional 3 days
- $\frac{3}{4}$ New Food + $\frac{1}{4}$ Old Food - for 5-6 days. If your dog is having loose stools after this period of time, continue feeding for an additional 3 days. If he is having solid, normal stools, then he is ready for 100% of the new food at mealtimes.

For more information, see <http://www.whole-dog-journal.com> for numerous articles about choosing the right food and their annual list for Approved Dry Dog Foods.

Brands Available at The Good Dog Spot

- By Nature
- Natural Balance
- Taste of the Wild

For other Reputable Brands (See Whole Dog Journal for complete Top 50 List)