

Feeding Your Pet

Nutrition plays an important part in your pet's life. Their food contributes toward development, health and activity.

There are three important factors to consider when selecting a diet for your pet. You first want to select a diet according to your pet's life stage. A puppy or kitten, who is growing and developing, will need a food to support this life stage. At this stage your pet requires more nutrients and calories. Large breed puppies (over 50# at adulthood) mature more slowly and therefore should be fed a large breed puppy food which is tailored for these breeds. It takes less to maintain an adult body than one that is growing, so adult pets should be fed an adult or maintenance diet. Senior pets (those 7 yrs. and older) start to go through physical changes and many times become less active, so it is important for your pet to be eating a diet that is tailored to this stage. The second factor to consider when choosing a diet is the presence of any medical condition. There are many prescription diets available to enhance and/or support health conditions, such as joint problems or kidney disease. Your veterinarian can help you with selecting the appropriate diet.

A third important factor in selecting your pet's diet is to look for the AAFCO approval. AAFCO is the Association of American Feed Control Officials which makes sure the food is safe, effective and useful to our pets.

How much food and how often?

Puppies and kittens who are growing rapidly and have high energy levels require more calories and should be fed three times daily. Adult and senior pets can be fed once to twice daily.

How much food to feed will vary from pet to pet. Metabolism, age, breed, and activity level will be contributing factors. Feeding instructions on the food package can be used as a *guideline*. It is important to monitor your pet's BCS (Body Condition Score) so that adjustments can be made in your pet's food portions.

Free feeding v.s. Scheduled meals

Scheduled feeding is the recommended form in feeding both your cat and dog. This helps you to control how much your pet is eating and monitor *if* your pet is eating. Scheduled feedings will be beneficial in house training puppies. Scheduled meals will lead to scheduled bathroom habits. Monitoring your pet's appetite can alert you to possible health concerns.

Free feeding can result in your pet becoming overweight. A majority of pets free fed are overweight because they can eat when they want and how much they want. Obesity is a contributing factor to a shorter life expectancy and a multitude of health conditions.

Should your pet need medication administered (most medications should be given with food), knowing when your pet eats can help ensure the medication will be properly absorbed.

Need for variety?

Pets do not need variety in their diets. They need a consistent and balanced diet. Frequent changes in food can contribute to intestinal upset or finicky eaters. When your pet needs to transition from one food to another it is important to do this gradually over a 7 day period. Pets slow to accept a new diet will require a longer transition period.

****IMPORTANT:** Always provide your pet with fresh water daily**