

The Ten Commandments of Proper Feeding

1. Give the Dog Plenty of Water to Drink

Cool, potable water should be available to the dog at all times and should be replaced frequently. Average water consumption is sixty milliliters per day per kilogram of body weight, or higher in puppies, lactating bitches, working dogs, or in hot weather.

2. Change Food Gradually

Any change in a dog's diet should be gradual, over a period of one week, so the dog's taste, digestion, and metabolism can adapt, and so that its intestinal microflora, which is much more adapted to the type of food eaten than that of humans, can be reconstituted as a function of the new food.

3. Feed Regularly

A dog is happiest when it eats the same food every day, from the same dish, and at the same time and place. The number of meals depends on the dog's physiological state, which should be frequently evaluated.

4. Control the Amount of Food Eaten

The size of the portions given is calculated as a function of the dog's daily energy needs and the number of calories the food contains. Portion size should be re-evaluated often to avoid any decline into obesity, and should be changed as the dog's weight changes.

5. Give the Dog a Balanced Diet

Whether the food is homemade or commercial, it should contain all the nutrients the dog needs, in sufficient quantities and in proportions appropriate for the dog's size (small, medium or large breed), physiological condition (maintenance, breeding, sport), age (puppy, mature adult, old dog), and pathological state if need be.

6. Choose the Dog's Food Carefully

The choice of food is not insignificant. Nutritional balance should be the overriding consideration. There are three basic criteria for choosing the right food for a dog: its age (puppy, adult, mature adult, or old dog), its level of physical or physiological activity (active dog, sporting dog, breeding dog), and its size (small, medium, or large).

7. Use the Food Properly

The manner in which the food is given is just as important as what is in the food. This is why, when feeding commercial food, it is essential to follow the manufacturer's instructions. When feeding homemade food, certain words should never be heard, namely "My dog eats what I eat," "My dog eats what he wants," and "My dog only eats..."

Finally, table scraps, sweets, sugar, cake, and chocolate have no place in a dog's diet. (It would be better to give the dog bits of rind from cheese.)

8. Cleanliness is Next to Godliness

Commercial foods offer the best guarantee of healthful cleanliness. Used properly, they present no risk of food poisoning. Open cans of dog food, fresh food, or defrosted food should be kept cold, and dry food should be kept in its re-closed bag in a dry place. If the dog does not finish its meal, the remaining food should be thrown away. The dog dish should be washed every day.

9. Keep Track of Individual Results

A diet's effectiveness, and the effects of any changes, should be kept track of through such simple indicators as changes in weight, the health of the dog's hair, the characteristics of its excrement, its appetite, and its day-to-day behavior.

10. Do not Hesitate to Consult the Veterinarian

By training, a veterinarian is also a dietitian for both sick and healthy dogs. Consult your veterinarian for persistent lack of appetite or bulimia, abnormal weight loss or gain, persistent diarrhea or constipation, worrisome physical or behavioral problems, or any notable changes in thirst or appetite that might be signs of a general illness requiring a thorough examination.

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