

Burt's Grub



The BARF saga for me began with a young German Shepherd, named Taj who had a really nasty habit of eating his feces, but that was not the worst part, he would come in the house and throw up. Or, he would throw up in puppy class, or anyplace else he happened to be when he was not feeling well. Not only was it horrible to have to clean up, it was really awful to know that he was suffering and I couldn't figure out what was wrong. I tried all types of premium foods. I had food delivered to my house by UPS, food that was fermented (yuck), and food that cost over \$2 a pound and nothing was helping him. I asked the vet what I could do, she said, as long as he doesn't lose weight, just test him for worms three or four times a year and he will be fine. Easy for her to say, she didn't have the piles in her house not only that, I knew that Taj was suffering. So, when I heard that Dr. Ian Billing Hurst was speaking in Marin, I jetted down and was in the front row to write down every word he had to say about the BARF or raw food diet. I didn't stop writing the entire weekend and after lots of questions and answers which led to

more questions, I felt ready to plunge into raw feeding for my three dogs. Was I in for some surprises? All of my dogs instantly liked all of the food choices, but I was a little heavy on the veggies so my dogs were fairly well cleaned out at the end of the month. It was as if they had had a dozen colonies one after another.

On the bright side, Taj stopped eating and throwing up feces. And Kelsie, our Chesapeake who had also picked up on the habit, stopped immediately. I have refined the way I start a dog out on the raw diet so there is little to no stomach upset and therefore no little surprises to clean up in the morning. There is usually a detox period that the older dogs go through after they have been eating raw for awhile. But every dog will go through changes in their own time.

I foster a lot of dogs, and since I don't feed kibble, they have to go cold turkey onto the diet after a 24 hour fast. One foster dog I remember in particular, a Chesapeake Bay Retriever we called Ben, really liked the raw diet, in fact Ben just plain liked to eat. I tried putting a handful of kibble into his bowl one morning and placed it in front of him, he looked at the bowl, then at me, and then he sat down and just kept looking at me. No more kibble for him, he wanted the real food.

Depending on where they are coming from, the dogs I get usually have kennel cough, bad hair coats, anxiety issues, bad teeth and bad breath, have just had a string of vaccinations and are stressed. The first day they get filtered water and Rescue Remedy, a Bach flower essence. Then it is on to the diet, and of course the bones. Some dogs just look at the bones not knowing what to do, once they watch my dogs eating, they soon are right in the middle of things.

I have never had aggression issues with my dogs over the bones. All the dogs eat together in the yard on the porch. In bad weather they take turns eating in the dog houses. New dogs always fit right in to the program and if there are possessive issues we work on those separately. I have books on hand to answer my questions; I have been on BARF lists on the internet to get ideas from other people about what has worked for them. And now I just do it, since I can feed myself so I guess I don't need a degree in nutrition to feed my dogs. After all, dogs are scavengers.