

Feeding a Fresh Food Diet

“Food has a three fold purpose for the consumer: to nourish, to induce growth and to give health protection.”

Juliette de Bairacli Levy

The realization that good nutrition is the foundation of health has many people turning to a raw or fresh food diet for their canine companions. Animals feel better when they are eating real food as opposed to processed food, kibble. Health challenges such as allergies, irritable bowel syndrome, arthritis, and periodontal disease can resolve completely. We feed ourselves, we feed our children, and we can feed our dogs. This is in opposition to what the big pet food manufactures would like us to believe as they spend billions of dollars on marketing to under mind our confidence. The key to success is keeping things simple as you begin an exciting journey to create the optimum diet for your dog.

BARF: What is it?

BARF is an acronym for biologically appropriate raw food diet or bones and raw food. Dr. Ian Billinghurst, an Australian veterinarian, has been credited with designing the BARF diet. While he has sold many books based on BARF, he denies being the originator of the diet. His book, Give Your Dog A Bone, is similar to The Complete Herbal Handbook For the Dog and Cat by Juliette de Bairacli Levy which was first published in 1955. Levy raised Afghan Hounds and traveled the world feeding them a raw natural diet. There are breeders throughout England, Germany, and the U.S. who have been successfully feeding fresh food diets to their dogs for generations.

The Ingredients

Ground Meat

Alternating between 3-4 types of ground meat such as lamb, beef, turkey, rabbit, turkey, chicken and venison ensures a full complement of all the amino acids. Sardines packed in water or olive oil are a good source of trace minerals and iodine. Cooked fish such as salmon or mackerel can be fed once or twice a week.

Offal

Offal or organ meat is a necessary part of this diet. Although heart is also a muscle meat, it should not be discounted as an important addition to the raw diet. Kidney, liver, and spleen, should be included when feeding a fresh food diet. Many important digestive enzymes are found in organs. Spleen is a good source of iron. Liver is high in vitamins and is a rich source of natural minerals.

Vegetables

Vegetables, organic when possible, need to be well washed and rinsed and can be cooked or pureed. The vegetable list includes but is not limited to green

beans, beets, carrots, cucumbers, celery, dandelion greens, fennel, jicama, kale, parsley, parsnips, green peas, rutabaga, turnips, yams, lettuce, and zucchini.

I recommend avoiding veggies from the nightshade family (eggplant, white potatoes, and onions). Broccoli, cabbage and brussel sprouts tend to cause gas when used in large amounts. Spinach and other veggies high in oxalates can inhibit the absorption of calcium when fed in large quantities. Root vegetables, beets, carrots, rutabagas and yams, are higher in sugars and can be problematic for dogs with diabetes, prone to yeast infections, or plagued with arthritis.

Bones

Bones are the main stay of the diet; some people recommend that up to 50% of the dogs' diet consist of bone. There are a couple of different types of bones, recreational bones and raw meaty bones. Recreational bones can include but are not limited to beef knucklebones or marrow bones. Dogs typically chew on these bones for extended periods of time. Recreational bones do not have much meat and help relive boredom. Some dogs, new to the diet, have not developed the strong teeth needed to chew and grind on the harder bones and can brake or crack their teeth. Start your dog on softer, non-weight bearing bones until their teeth gain the strength necessary to tackle the harder, weight, bearing bones safely.

Raw Meaty Bones

Raw meaty bones are bones with more meat than recreational bones and are fed as a meal. Bones in this category include but are not limited to: chicken and turkey necks, chicken and turkey wings, lamb necks, beef necks, lamb and beef shanks, and turkey tails. Some people choose to grind bones and meat into a mince. If you find that your dog will not chew the bones or they are having a hard time digesting the raw meaty bone this is an alternate way to feed bones. There are a few meat grinders on the market that will grind chicken and turkey necks. This is also effective with older dogs that are missing teeth and can't chew their bones efficiently.

Slippery Elm is a gentle herb that lubricates, soothes, and protects internal mucus membranes of the digestive tract. It aids diarrhea, colitis, irritations of the stomach and constipation. Slippery Elm is also nutritious as it contains vitamin A, B complex, C, K, calcium, magnesium, and sodium. It can be fed to animals as a digestive tonic – 1 teaspoon of the dried herb steeped in 8 ounces of hot water or chicken broth. This can be fed alone or mixed with the ground meat meal.

Essential Fatty Acids are required in the diet as they cannot be produced in the body. There are 2 essential fatty acids, linoleic acid, (an omega 6 fatty acid) and alpha-linoleic acid (an omega 3 fatty acid) that are essential to be included in the diet. They are necessary constituents of cell membranes, for the synthesis of

prostaglandins, and for maintenance of the skin. They are also required for reproduction, normal hair development and wound healing.

Generally, Omega 3 Fatty Acids reduce inflammation and omega 6 fatty acids enhance inflammation. Omega 3 Fatty Acids are more limited in the diet thus it is important to include them. Benefits of Omega 3 FA include:

1. Inhibition of tumor development.
2. Improving arthritis.
3. Relief of allergy symptoms.
4. Decreasing the inflammatory response.

Omega 3 Fatty Acids are predominately found in fish oils such as wild salmon oil.

Prebiotics are defined as indigestible food ingredients that beneficially affect the host by selectively stimulating the growth of bacteria which have the potential to improve host health. They are a class of carbohydrates known as oligosaccharides which are indigestible in the stomach and small intestine. They remain intact until they reach the large intestine and are broken down and fermented by the resident microflora. This results in proper digestion of food and elimination of waste. I like Prebiotic Plus from Animals Apawthecary. This formula contains extracts of inulin-rich chicory root, fennel seed (to prevent flatulence) and marshmallow root.

Getting Started

The transition to a fresh food diet is primarily determined by how your dog tolerates diet change. Current health issues must always be considered. This transition is a reconditioning the digestive track. I will often recommend an initial mixture of well cooked white rice, whole milk yogurt, and canned pumpkin. After two to three days of this you can gradually decrease the white rice and add ground meat.

During the second week I have people gradually introduce their first meaty bones. This can be a time of high anxiety for many people. However once you observe your pooch happily chewing a bone anxieties and fears are gradually relived. When first introducing bones do it at a time when you can relax with your animal with a cup of tea or a glass of wine. I have had many people report that the relationship with their animals improved during this process. Depending on the dog lamb shanks, lamb necks, or beef necks are the perfect bones to start with. Initially you can replace a ground meat meal with a meaty bone about every three days and slowly work up to a meaty bone every day over a 3 to 6 month period. Throwing up bits of bone is not unusual during this time, some animals become constipated and others can have diarrhea. If this is the case then back off on the bone feeding and make the introduction more gradual. Once your dog is tolerating lamb and beef bones you can begin to introduce chicken and turkey necks.

During this time you may also begin replacing the canned pumpkin with different vegetables. I like to make vegetable purees using the food processor. These purees can be mixed with canned pumpkin. Freezing vegetable puree in ice cube trays or quart freezer bags is a wonderful way to plan ahead.

How much you feed will depend on your dog. Begin with the recommended guidelines below increasing the volume of food fed if your pooch is looking too thin or decreasing the volume if your furry friend is looking a bit on the chunky side. Food volume will vary with activity level and age.

General Feeding Guidelines per Meal

Animal Weight	Raw Meat (1 cup = 1/2 lb)	Veggies	Yogurt
10 lbs	½ Cup (1/4 lb)	1 TBLSP	1 teaspoon
50 lbs.	1 Cup (1/2 lb)	3 TBLSP	1 TBLSP
100 lbs	2 Cups (1 lb)	½ Cup	¼ Cup