

Puppies and a Fresh Food Diet Grace Waymire

As people learn about and experience the benefits of a fresh food diet for their K-9 companions the demand for raw fed puppies has increased. Many breeders begin weaning puppies at 4 weeks old to a fresh food diet rather than processed foods. These puppies are frequently described as healthy, strong, robust, calm, and extremely smart. For those of us who have been charmed by an adorable puppy who was not initially weaned to a fresh food diet there is hope! Babies, regardless of their age, generally make the transition quite easily.

Puppies eat from 5% to 10% of their daily body weight. For example a 20-pound puppy would eat 2 pounds of food a day. This will vary with breed, metabolism, and activity. At adulthood dogs will eat 2% to 3% of their body weight a day. Ultimately, the best test for weight is to observe your dog and increase the amount you are feeding if he is too thin and feed less if your dog is too heavy. Keep in mind that puppies will experience growth spurts which require an increase in amount of food ingested. Puppies need 3 meals a day until they are 6 months old and then they can be fed twice a day.

In October of 2009, Lucy, age 8 weeks, joined our family. Having introduced many puppies to fresh foods, Lucy's transition was the easiest with minimal digestive upset. For the first 4 months I kept her diet very simple with minimal variety. I limited meat types to lamb, rabbit, and turkey and vegetables to canned pumpkin. She received a Prebiotic each morning and I added slippery elm to all her ground meat meals. After 4 months she easily tolerated an increase in variety of meat and vegetables.

Meal 1	Meal 2	Meal 3
Ground meat – lamb and turkey	Rabbit –with bone in or	Alternate between meal types, one and two.
Canned pumpkin	Small piece turkey neck	
Goat Milk Yogurt	or	
Baby rice cereal mixed with goat milk or chicken broth	meaty lamb neck, or other meaty bone appropriately sized for your puppy	

Meat types - To ensure sufficient amounts of the Essential Fatty Acids and amino acids it is important to feed a combination of meat types such as lamb, turkey, and rabbit. Organ meat such as liver, heart, kidney, or spleen should also be added to meals in small quantities. **Meg's Meats** ground lamb has organ meat mixed with the ground muscle meat

Yogurt- Whole goat's milk yogurt is often easier for puppies to digest than other type of yogurts. Yogurt contains probiotic organisms which support the resident microflora. As your puppy grows you can transition to whole milk plain yogurt.

Vegetables – Canned pumpkin is a good source of fiber and will help to keep stools firm.

Bones- always feed bones, raw. Ultimately feed a diet that consists of 50% bones. This helps to prevent skeletal problems. **Meg's Meats, bone dust,** mixed in with ground meat meals can help ease the transition to bones.

Supplements – kelp, keep supplements to a minimum as they can be difficult for the liver to process.

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.

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.
