Sample Diets

Animal Protection Institute, June 30, 2003

Disclaimer: Before you start to feed your companion animal a home-prepared diet, API strongly recommends that you discuss your decision with your veterinarian or a holistic veterinarian in your area. (For a list of holistic veterinary practitioners, contact the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association at 410-569-0795, or check the directories at www.altvetmed.org).

API also suggests you obtain one or more of the following books, so that you have a more complete understanding of canine and/or feline nutritional needs. **(API does not sell these books.)** It is essential that you follow any diet's recommendations closely, including all ingredients and supplements. Failure to do so may result in serious health consequences for your animal companion.

- Dr. Pitcairn's Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats. Richard Pitcairn, DVM, and Susan Pitcairn. Rodale Press. ISBN 0875962432.
- Natural Cat Care. Celeste Yarnall. Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc. ISBN 1885203632.
- Natural Dog Care. Celeste Yarnall. Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc. ISBN 1885203470.
- The Holistic Guide for a Healthy Dog. Wendy Volhard and Kerry Brown, DVM. Howell Book House. ISBN 0876055609.
- Give Your Dog a Bone. Dr. Ian Billinghurst. Bridge Printery. ISBN 064610281.
- Home-Prepared Dog and Cat Diets: the Healthful Alternative. Donald R. Strombeck, DVM. Iowa State University Press. ISBN 0813821495.
- It's for the Animals! Natural Care & Resources. Helen L. McKinnon. C.S.A. Inc. Available from www.ItsForTheAnimals.com; P.O. Box 1913; Fairview, NC 28730; toll-free 1-888-339-IFTA (4382); info@itsfortheanimals.com.

These recipes are intended to get you started, to supplement a commercial diet or to suffice until you can obtain more information or a book on the subject. They have not been balanced for long-term use.

These are "mix-and-match" diets. Select **one ingredient from each category** (protein, starch if applicable), and **add up to one cup** of puréed raw or lightly steamed vegetables (up to three or four at a time of the following: broccoli, squash, sweet potato, cabbage, peas, carrots, green beans, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, kale). Ingredients may also be split, 1/2 of one plus 1/2 of another from the same category. Use organically-raised meat sources whenever possible to minimize antibiotic and hormone residues; this is required if feeding liver. The importance of variety cannot be overstressed. (This applies to any and all diets and recipes!) Do not get in the habit of feeding just one or two combinations of ingredients. Pay attention to your animal companion's health: his weight, activity level, skin and coat quality. If these are not maintaining or improving, consult your veterinarian about changing elements of the diet.

To make a large batch of food, mix protein source, starch source (if applicable), oil, vegetables, and calcium together. Freeze in meal-sized portions. The other supplements should be added fresh at each meal.

The vitamin-mineral supplement should be a good quality, human-type supplement. Some of the cheaper human supplements, particularly those with a heavy coating, are not well digested by people and will not be by animals. To check, submerge a tablet in a glass of water with a splash of vinegar in it. (This mimics the acid environment of the stomach.) The tablet should dissolve within about 20 minutes. The average human supplement is designed for a 150-pound adult. A cat should get about 1/6 to 1/10 of a human supplement. A dog dosage can be calculated from the weight of the dog compared to 150 pounds. Do not overdose! Some vitamins and many minerals are toxic at high doses.

Alternatively, you can use a specially made dog or cat vitamin supplement, such as Pet Tabs or Nu-Cat. There are many good animal supplements available today that can be found at your local feed store or health food store.

Many supplements from the health food store require that a human take 4-6 tablets a day; a single tablet might be perfect for a smaller animal's daily needs. You can grind up the supplements with a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle to add to the food; or get one that comes in capsules, and open the capsule to empty the powder into the food.

Bone meal must be an edible, human grade. Do not use bone meal intended for gardening or plants.

Probiotics include acidophilus and other "good" bacteria. They help maintain your companion animal's normal bacterial population and prevent colonization by disease-causing bacteria. Digestive enzymes are important to keep the pancreas from being overworked, and to aid digestion so your animal companion gets the greatest benefit from the food she eats.

Meat may be fed cooked or raw. (While many holistic veterinarians recommend feeding raw meat, there are potential risks to your companion animal's health from bacterially contaminated meat. Please discuss this issue with your veterinarian before feeding raw meat.) If feeding raw, it is recommended that meat be frozen for 72 hours at -4 degrees F prior to use. Most meats can be refrozen one time safely, so once you mix the meal, it can be put back in the freezer until thawed for feeding. Always follow standard safe meat handling procedures.

IMPORTANT!! With any diet change, please go slowly and gradually! Your animal companion's tastes and digestive system need time to accommodate to new foods. Too rapid a change may result in diarrhea, vomiting, refusal to eat, or other problems. This is especially important with older animals, sick animals, and cats.

DIET FOR ADULT DOGS

Amounts given are adequate for one day's feeding of a 20-35 pound dog (depending on age & activity level). Adjust amounts proportionally for your dog's weight. Starches may be decreased or omitted in case of digestive problems or for weight loss.

CHOOSE ONE PROTEIN SOURCE:

Animal Proteins:
(meat amounts given in raw weight)

- 1/3 pound boneless chicken breast or thigh, chopped, ground, or minced
- 3 large hard-boiled eggs
- 1/3 pound lean beef
- Optional: once a week, substitute 4 oz organic liver for 1/2 of any meat source

Vegetarian Proteins:

- 1 cup cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup tofu, firm
- 1 cup soybeans, cooked
- 1 cup lentils, cooked

CHOOSE ONE STARCH SOURCE:

With Animal Proteins:

- 2 cups cooked macaroni
- 3 cups cooked potato, with skin, chopped or mashed

- 2 cups cooked rice
- 2 cups rolled oats, quick, cooked

With Vegetarian Proteins:

- 2 cups cooked brown rice
- 2 cups cooked potato, with skin, chopped or mashed
- 2 cups cooked macaroni
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 cup plus cooked black-eyed peas
- 2-1/2 cups rolled oats, quick, cooked (1-1/4 cup raw)
- 1-1/2 cups cooked brown rice plus 1 cup cooked kidney beans

SUPPLEMENTS:

- puréed veggie mix (up to 1 cup)
- 1 Tbsp olive oil, or 1/2 Tbsp olive and 1/2 Tbsp flaxseed oil
- 400 mg calcium (elemental, as calcium citrate or carbonate)
- **or** 1200 mg (approximately 1-1/2 tsp) bone meal powder (human grade)
- 1/4 tsp salt substitute (potassium chloride) — give 3 or 4 times a week
- 1 multiple vitamin-mineral supplement (human quality)
- 1 probiotic/digestive enzyme supplement

Vegetarian dogs should get Vitamin B12, carnitine (250 mg) and taurine (250 mg) once a week. Vegetarian dogs of breeds prone to developing dilated cardiomyopathy should get supplemental Carnitine (50-100 mg) daily.