
Canine Nutrition 101

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Everyone has the best of intentions when it comes to feeding our canine companions. You probably have thought about what flavor your dogs might enjoy or even what size kibble bit would be good for them. And that in itself is good, but have

you ever thought about what is printed on the dog food label itself. Have you ever looked at the ingredient panel? If we left it up to the mass marketers, they would all have us believing “their” food is the best or only food that is good for your dog.

My nutritional journey began with an allergic Westie, Sam; and, a Westie who had allergic reaction to vaccinations – Dandy. Dandy suffered as many as 28 seizures a day and had to take barbiturates to control his seizures. The barbiturates he had to take caused severe gastrointestinal problems – i.e. major diarrhea and vomiting. When I was told to “just give him a Pepcid every day and he’ll be fine”, I did not accept that as a definitive answer and began researching dog food and dog food ingredients.

The goal here is to inform you about dog food ingredients. What ingredients are good and what ingredients should be avoided. Once you have the information you can then make the best choices for your dog’s nutritional requirements.



Meat!

Dogs are carnivores. A dog appropriate diet should be based on

meat. Dogs don’t need grains in their diet to survive, but some carbohydrates can be beneficial and are used to hold the kibble bits together.

Meat and meat meal should be specific as to what type of meat is included. The label should



read beef, turkey, chicken, bison, venison, rabbit, etc. Basically, meal is the meat but devoid of moisture.

It is recommended that any product that uses the terms "meat", "animal" or "poultry" by products be avoided.



Grains

If you choose a diet that includes "grains", look for whole grains, brown rice, millet, barley, or oats. "Glutens"

should never be included in the ingredient panel.

Dogs cannot readily digest corn, wheat or soy. They also cannot digest any of the "glutens" that are related to corn, wheat or soy. These ingredients just sit in the intestine/colon, fermenting, causing gas, excess stool, and/or vomiting of yellow bile.

Also, corn, wheat and soy are the TOP three food allergies in dogs. They can contribute to chronic ear infections, itchy skin, chewing at their feet, rubbing of the face, etc.



Fruits & Vegetables

If you are choosing to keep your dog on a "grain-free" diet, it

will include some carbohydrates such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, whole fruits and vegetables.



Organics

Organic ingredients are great! Just be sure that you are not undermining the protein levels for the sake of organics.

"Natural"

The word "natural" holds no value when it comes to dog food ingredients. It is so misleading.

Don't let it fool you by the fact that because it is labeled "natural", it means that it is good for your dog. Sugar and corn are natural but should not be included in your dog's diet.

"Holistic"

Overall the word "holistic" is a good word, but it scares some people. They think you are "way out there" if you use that word. "Holistic" in essence means: "Concerned with wholes rather than analysis or separation into parts." (Dictionary.com)

Unfortunately "natural & "holistic" are the new buzz words by some of the big dog food companies, but really don't hold the value by which they are meant to be appropriate for our canine companions.

The presentations were interesting, educational, and extremely well done. The CHF will be making many of these presentations available on their website. If you are interested in a particular topic you will be able to download the presentation from www.akcchf.org. Check their website periodically to find out which presentations are available.

Visit the Canine Health Foundation website to become familiar with the work they are doing. The money they raise to support canine research will find answers to diseases that affect dogs and humans as well. Supporting their efforts is certainly worthwhile.

(Kay McGuire, DVM represented the WHWTCA at the conference and Ann Marie Holowathy represented the Westie Foundation of America)

The Westie Foundation of America, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation, recognized by the IRS as a 501 (C) (3) organization. The mission of the Foundation is to provide financial aid and other support for medical research in order to benefit the health and quality of life of West Highland White Terriers; and to further develop and communicate information regarding the health, care, breeding and quality of life of Westies to Westie owners, Westie breeders and veterinarians.

