

## Veterinary Nutrition

With the epidemic of companion animal cancers and illnesses unheard of 20 or 30 years ago reaching epic proportions, the holistic veterinary health community looked inward, quite literally, at the environment of the companion animal. With the motto "garbage in, garbage out" in hand, it probed the "pet food" companies in search of their ingredients and came away disgusted. This wholly unregulated industry was throwing "everything but the kitchen sink" into their cans and bags with the pretty pictures of tabbies and terriers on the labels. The litter on the slaughterhouse floors, where the tumors and other diseased flesh, intestines and their contents, beaks and cartilage, ground hoofs and mucous membranes were found, made its way into the food bowls of our beloved pets.

The law of supply and demand then took over, as pet owners everywhere voted at the check out counter, and many improved pet food companies emerged. Touting "human grade" and "organic" ingredients, the quality rose dramatically. Brands such as Felidae and Canidae, Nutro, Wellness, Wysong, Lambaderm, Innova, Nature's Recipe, ProPlan, Precise, Back to Basics, Bil Jac, California Naturals, to name the top tier, bring a variety of wholesome ingredients to our companion animals. At the same time the marketplace was changing, many experts explored alternatives to precooked meals in a can or bag. Nutrition books with holistic recipes, websites and on-line chat groups began supporting the idea of a raw, organic diet made of fresh ingredients we animal guardians could prepare ourselves. Talk about fresh! The BARF (bones and raw food) diet, the prey animal diet, the "Ultimate Diet" all sent the same message: centuries ago dogs and cats not only survived but thrived on small prey animals and table scraps. What was the secret? Natural, organic uncooked ingredients with a combination of muscle and organ meat for protein, bones for calcium, vegetables for minerals and vitamins, and grains and fatty acids for energy provided the carnivore (cats) and the omnivore (dogs) a healthy and robust diet without all the artificial, hormone and insecticide laced additives.

These homemade, specialty diets are just one option of many that deliver excellent nutrition to our companion animals. As mentioned above, retail pet stores now offer a wide variety of excellent choices, as do some on-line outlets. How do you know if you're delivering a high-quality food? Read the bag or can of food you feed your animals. If meat is not one of the first ingredients on the list, preferably human grade, look for another food. By-products, ground corn and other meals, rice, yeast, long chemical names acting as preservatives are not ingredients of a healthful, natural diet for our companion carnivores, dogs or cats. If you have a finicky eater who insists on his kibble, augment his usual diet with some fresh vegetables and a little bit of ground hamburger or chicken from your own dinner. Raw is better since cooking kills off the enzymes that aid in digestion, but even cooked table scraps will provide a tasty and healthful addition. Ground gizzards and an egg once a week deliver huge amounts of vitamins, minerals, and essential fatty acids that provide a boost to his diet. Raw bones (cooked bones splinter and can get stuck, so never feed these) and meaty chicken necks are another wholesome treat. Before long, you will start to see your lethargic couch potato with a spring in his step again looking forward to his next meal. Skin and digestive problems will likely disappear, or never materialize in the first place. The extra effort takes just a little up front planning and before starting any

new dietary regimen, it is always wise to consult your veterinarian and seek expert advice. But after all, isn't your four-footed friend worth it?

#### **BOOKS ON VETERINARY NUTRITION:**

Natural Nutrition for Dogs and Cats: The Ultimate Diet, Kymthy R. Schultze, CCN, AHI, Hay House, Inc. Carlsbad, CA.

Natural Health for Dogs & Cats, Richard H. Pitcairn, DVM, Ph.D & Susan Hubble Pitcairn, Rodale Press, Inc., Emmaus, PA, Chapters 2-6.

Pet Allergies: Remedies for An Epidemic, Alfred J. Plechner, DVM & Martin Zucker, Dr. Goodpet Laboratories Very Healthy Enterprises, Inc., Inglewood, CA, Chapter 2: Is Pet Food Fit Food?

Reigning Cats & Dogs: Good Nutrition, Healthy Happy Animals, Pat McKay, Oscar Publications, Pasadena, CA

Natural Healing for Dogs & Cats, Diane Stein, The Crossing Press, Freedom, CA, Optimal Nutrition, p. 49

The Nature of Animal Healing, Martin Goldstein, DVM, Ballantine Books, NY, Chapter 2: It All Starts with Food

#### **ON-LINE OPTIONS:**

[www.felinefuture.com/nutrition](http://www.felinefuture.com/nutrition) Sells powdered supplement to organ and muscle meat for a very healthful and balanced diet for both dogs and cats.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BARFNE/join> Offers a chat line and resources for the BARF diet, where you can ask questions and learn of others' experiences.