



Homeward Bound Golden Retriever Rescue

Golden Rule Training

Dog Food, Nutrition

According to reviews, better-quality dog food results in a healthier coat, fewer digestive problems and firmer stools. Since your dog will absorb more nutrients from better-quality dog food, less will be passed as waste.

We all know dogs love meat and they need protein. Unlike cats, who need high amounts of protein and no carbohydrates, dogs need a diet that contains as much as 50 percent carbohydrates. Experts say meat should be the first ingredient, followed by healthy carbohydrate sources such as potatoes, or more absorbable grains like rice.

- **How do I choose a high-quality dog food?** Check the label first for the AAFCO nutritional adequacy statement, which indicates the food provides complete and balanced nutrition. It should also include the life stage for which the food is appropriate.
 - Life stages include growth (appropriate for puppies), adult maintenance, gestation/lactation, senior (appropriate for older dogs), and “all life stages.” A food labeled for all life stages can be used throughout a dog’s life, from weaning through adulthood.
 - When choosing a food, look for one that fits your pet’s flavor preferences, age, lifestyle, medical conditions, and environment. For instance, you would choose a different food for an over-weight dog, a dog with allergies, one with a sensitive stomach, or one that needs more nutrients for an active life style.
 - Choose a food that has whole meat or whole meat meal (lamb meal, chicken meal, etc.) as its top four ingredients. Grain sources should also be whole grains, as opposed to glutens or other processed products. Avoid meat by-products and bone meals, and **please NO CORN OR WHEAT!**
 - Avoid BHT, BHA and ethoxyquin as preservatives. A better choice would be foods preserved with tocopherols (vitamin E) or vitamin C (ascorbate).
- **Should you change your dog’s foods periodically?** Many experts say you should change brands every few months as well, which will ensure that any nutrient deficiencies in a particular food won't have long-term effects. Find three or four foods your dog likes and alternate between them. High-meat-content canned foods are best used as a supplement to a high-quality dry food. Others believe sticking with one, good quality brand food is better. Choosing a food that is well-balanced should provide your dog with what he needs. In addition, changing foods can lead to an upset stomach and diarrhea. If you choose to alternate, mix the new food with the old for a few days before switching over completely.

Observe your dog carefully when trying a new food. Some dogs need more protein and some need less, just as some dogs need to eat more than others, depending on activity level. Look for changes in coat and skin, along with stool consistency.

- **Should I use dry food or canned food?** The same story applies; there are many thoughts on this subject as well. It is fine to give your dog kibble and a little canned dog food mixed together. A diet of

all canned food can lead to obesity and is not necessarily good for your dog's teeth. If you prefer to only give your dog a quality dry food that is perfectly acceptable.

On the other hand, canned food might be better for dogs with urinary tract problems because it has higher moisture content. Some dry foods are designed to help clean the teeth during chewing, but dogs with severe dental problems may do better on a moist food. If you are unsure, ask your veterinarian.

- **How much should I feed my dog?** For Golden Retrievers, it depends on their size. The average size of a Golden is between 50 and 75 pounds (male and female); this size dog only needs 1 cup of dog food in the morning and 1 cup a night. If the dog is over weight (check with your veterinarian first for the correct weight your dog should maintain), you can add a little canned pumpkin to their food. It adds a little fiber and makes them feel full without adding an increase of calories.
- **Puppies and Older Dogs:** Puppies need about twice as many calories per pound as an adult dog of the same breed. Older dogs need 20% fewer calories than middle-aged dogs because they are less active and have slower metabolisms, according to "Nutrient Requirements of Dogs and Cats," a 2006 report from the National Research Council, a scientific research unit of the nonprofit National Academies.
- **Pet food safety is a growing concern.** Past recalls of dog foods because of wheat and rice glutes contaminated with melamine have spotlighted some major issues regarding pet foods and their ingredients. Recent pet-food recalls have included one for salmonella contamination in late 2008. While the majority of foods have been deemed to be safe, this is clearly an ongoing issue.

There are many convenient places to buy good, healthy dog food. Your local Petsmart, Petco and feed stores all have many to choose from.

Sources: WebMD Dog Care and ASPCA