

Baerental Shepherds strongly recommends feeding puppies and dogs raw food.

In January, 2009, a female I co-owned with a partner in Santa Fe died suddenly of massive liver failure due to kibble that had been made with moldy grain – Aflatoxin poisoning. After about a week of intensive research into dog food, I switched all my dogs to raw food. Within a month, the difference in my dogs was astounding. Their coats were shinier and had more color, they showed more energy in all their work, and there was clear evidence in two dogs of ligament tightening. In one dog this resulted in no more work-related injuries and in the second, fairly flat feet became tight and deep. Many long time raw-feeding breeders whom I have talked to in this area have found that it largely eliminates orthopedic problems, including hip and elbow dysplasia.

The summer 09 pregnancy of Macy's was the first for me with the pregnant mother on a raw diet the whole time, and the first litter on raw as they were being switched to regular food. Once more, there was a huge difference in the litters vitality and health. It wasn't just a little 10% difference, it was more like a 60% difference. They were much more active and robust than former litters and much stronger in their feeding.

I now start all my litters at 4 weeks on a finely ground complete food, like Bravo, mixed with goat milk. Although the Bravo is best commercially available food because of its fine grind for really young puppies, it does not have enough vegetables and fruits for puppies older than about 4 months or so. At that time, they should be switched over to a food with a higher and more varied vegetable and fruit content. One good example of this is Oma's Pride. In the case of Oma's Pride, the dogs need 1/2 teaspoon each of dried alfalfa and kelp per day and 1000 mg of fish oil per 10 pounds per day as young puppies, and per 25 pounds as adults. This is really important for good brain development. Other complete foods, like BARF Patties, already have the fish oil and the alfalfa and kelp mixed in.

There is an excellent pet store, K-9 Kitchen, in Albuquerque, devoted exclusively to raw food for cats and dog. The owner, Kathy Herman, is a great source of information on raw feeding and related issues. The address is 3800 Midway Place, NE, phone, 505 345 5959.

Feeding raw food to dogs is based on this information:

- Dogs can not digest vegetables and fruits unless they are ground up.
- Dogs need both meat and bone in order to the correct balance of Phosphorus and Calcium for good health. Eggs with their shells have the same balance of Phosphorus and Calcium.
- A days ration should include 25% fruit and vegetables, 25% ground meat, and 50% raw meaty bones. A complete food containing ground bone along with the 25% fruits and vegetables can also be used instead of feeding meaty bones.
- Many people feed one meal a day that is 50% ground fruits and vegetables, combined with ground meat, and a second meal of raw meaty bones like chicken backs, chicken quarters, port neck bones, etc. Pro's Ranch Market in Albuquerque, Central and Atrisco SW, carries many varieties of meat at very good prices. They have regular sales of many kinds of meats.
- Puppies need a bit more fat and protein than adult dogs, so the diet can be adjusted to have less fruits and vegetables.
- Male dogs need more red meat than females because they need the additional Zinc for proper development and health of their reproductive systems.
- "Recreational bones," like knuckle bones, are also available at K9 kitchen and elsewhere. They help with teething and good development of jaws and teeth.
- If you want to make the meal of ground meat with fruits and vegetables yourself, you can grind them in a juicer, using the juice and the pulp, or use a food processor. Do not feed dogs onions or grapes. There is also a freeze dried product of fruits and vegetables called SoJo's which is reconstituted in water and then mixed with the meat. It's available at K9 Kitchen or you can get it over the internet.

There are lots of other raw options. Feeding raw takes a bit of getting used to, and if you make it yourself, it's more work, but the rewards are huge.

If raw food is not something you are willing to do, K9 Kitchen recommends one kibble – Nature's Logic. She has found that adding 1/2 cup - 1 cup of raw ground meat to each meal of Nature's Logic gives some of the benefits of complete raw feeding.

If you have any questions at all about how to feed your puppy, please feel free to call me at any time: 505 350 3128.

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