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**KENNEL CLUB ASSURED BREEDER SCHEME
NEW PUPPY OWNER ADVICE SHEET**

**KEEP YOUR DOG HEALTHY AND HAPPY
PUPPY DIET ADVICE**

Puppy ownership is a big responsibility and when you bring your new puppy home, it will require your help, support and attention. There are so many things to think about, including training, healthcare, exercise and, of course, diet. Feeding your puppy sensibly and correctly is vital to its health, development and general wellbeing. Below you will find some general guidelines to raising a healthy and happy dog.

Little and often

Like all infants, puppies grow very rapidly (up to twenty times faster than an adult dog), and so require a specially formulated diet to aid their physical development. A high energy growth food is recommended and needs to be fed at evenly spaced intervals to avoid over stretching your puppy's small stomach.

Feed your puppy four meals a day up until the age of 10 weeks, and then reduce its feed to three meals a day until it is six months old, when you can change to one or two meals a day, and keep it on this regime for the rest of its life.

There are many varied feeding regimes to choose from: dry complete diets, semi-moist or pouch, tinned food (with or without biscuit mixer), raw food, and home-made food. Each food category has different qualities, and finding the right balance for your puppy is extremely important.

The most suitable diet should be easily digested and produce dark brown, firm, formed stools. If your puppy produces soft or light stools or has wind or diarrhoea, then the diet may not suit your puppy or it might have some kind of digestive problem or infection. If the condition persists for more than 2 days, consult your vet for advice.

Please remember that stability in the diet will help maintain good digestion. Any change in diet should be made very gradually over at least a week to avoid upset and you should try a new diet for at least 10 days before making any further changes.

Typical Feeding Guide

Meals should be split during the course of the day and ideally a young puppy should go at least 4 hours between meals. Typical feeding times would be:

8.00 AM
12.00 Midday
4.00 PM
8.00 PM

It is better not to leave food down (so throw away any uneaten food after 20 minutes) and not to change your puppy's food regularly as this could cause havoc with its digestion and toilet training regime. However, make sure that water is always available to your puppy, so never take its water bowl away.

Quantities

The quantity of food should be approximately the same for each meal. Young puppies, particularly those of a large or fast growing breed, can sometimes need more food as puppies than they require as adults. Increases of food should always be gradual and a good idea is to increase the amount on a weekly basis from 8 weeks until the puppy is 16 weeks old. Typically, by the time a puppy reaches 16 weeks, it will need roughly the same amount as when it is an adult.

Puppies can be greedy or picky with their food so it can sometimes be difficult to gauge how much to give them. Care should be taken not to over or underfeed your puppy. Puppies can often appear 'chubby', particularly after they have eaten, but under normal circumstances they should have a defined 'waist'. If in any doubt about your puppy's weight or diet, consult your vet when you next visit for a puppy check-up.

Dry complete foods

There is a wide range of dry complete foods on the market and the quality varies widely. To get the best out of your puppy's development choose a food specially designed for puppies. Some puppies are not accustomed to complete dry foods immediately after weaning but will normally grow to like them with time. If your puppy does not seem to like eating dry complete and this is what you wish to feed, you can try soaking the food in a little warm water to soften it, or mix in a little tinned puppy food, gradually reducing the quantity until your puppy is fully weaned and accepts dry complete.

Semi-moist, pouch, tinned and frozen foods

As with complete dry foods, semi-moist, pouch, tinned and frozen foods can vary in quality. Again, choose a good quality diet which is easily digestible, nutritionally complete and does not require additional foods to be added to it. As before it is best to avoid changes in your puppy's diet - so if you find a product that works for your puppy, stick to it.

Home-made food (raw fresh or frozen meat)

Before the advent of commercial dog foods, it was quite common to feed dogs raw or cooked fresh meat. Many people still consider that there is no substitute for feeding raw meat; these diets are sometimes referred to as BARF (Bones and raw food diet). Meat on its own however, is not enough, and dogs need other additives, such as biscuit, and supplements to maintain a completely balanced diet. Puppies in particular, need a balanced and nutritious diet whilst they are growing up, as even a slight imbalance may harm their development and growth. Additionally, home-made foods obviously necessitate a fair degree of pre-planning and preparation.. For these reasons, many owners find it easier to feed a complete or mixed food which can remove some of the guesswork and ensure that their dog is getting all it needs.

Treats

Giving treats is a good way to reward your dog during training and encourage the behaviour you want. There are a wide variety of prepared and natural treats on the market which vary hugely in quality. Some commercial treats have lots of sugar, colourings, milk products and fat in them, so always check the ingredients label. Good quality prepared treats have been developed with dogs dietary needs in mind.

However, all treats should be given sparingly, and never comprise more than 15% of your puppy's total calorie intake. If you use treats regularly, reduce the amount of main meal food your dog is receiving in order to avoid obesity. Some chew treats have proven ability to help prevent dental diseases, but again check the label to ensure you are getting a genuine product.

Human chocolate is poisonous to dogs and can cause liver damage and even be fatal, so never give your dog any chocolate, or leave any lying around where it might be found and eaten. Be especially careful at Christmas and Easter time.

Avoid giving your puppy any sweet biscuits or sugary treats which are bad for its teeth as well as its waistline, and can cause sugar 'highs' and 'lows'. Stick to prepared which tend to be much more popular.

Always remember that table scraps contain calories so they should be taken into account as part of the daily diet. Better still; don't be tempted to feed table scraps at all.

Food sensitivities and intolerances

Like humans, some dogs are sensitive or intolerant to certain foods, and this can cause a variety of problems. In extreme cases, they may develop colitis (slime and blood in their stools). Always consult your vet if you notice your dog displaying any of the following symptoms:

- Lethargy
- Aggressive or hyperactive behaviour
- Chronic skin and ear problems
- Light to mid-brown loose bulky stools or diarrhoea
- Slime and jelly being passed with stools and flatulence
- Bloating and weight gain or loss

Feeding tips

- Clean fresh water should always be available. Dogs eating wet food (ie: canned) will receive moisture through their food and therefore require less water than dogs eating dry food. However, extra water should always be made available.
- Do not refill half empty bowls, but ensure that fresh food is always provided at each meal time. This is particularly true in the hot weather when food left in bowls can attract flies and other insects.
- Half full cans of dog food should be kept covered in the fridge, but allowed to stand until the food is up to room temperature before feeding.
- There are two different types of dog food manufactured "complete" and "complementary", clearly marked on the label. A complete food can be fed as a sole source of nutrition and is available as both canned and dry food. A complementary food is designed to accompany the complete food and should not be used as the only source of daily nutrition.

- It is better to stick to one variety of complete puppy food, so you don't need to add anything to the diet. Always remember that over-supplementing can be harmful to your puppy.
- If your puppy does not eat all of its meal in one go, you may be offering it too much. Not all puppies eat the amount recommended by the pet food manufacturers. Puppies' appetites can vary enormously, with some eating much less than the recommended amounts, whilst others scoff their meal down as if it was their last!
- As long as your puppy is not showing any growth or digestive problems, resist the temptation to change its diet or offer it a range of foods, as you may turn your puppy into a fussy eater.
- Never change your puppy's diet abruptly (unless under the direction of your vet). If you want to change its diet, do it gradually over a period of a few days to a week or longer if necessary.
- Avoid feeding your puppy before travelling in the car, as this can encourage car sickness.
- Do not feed your puppy an hour before or after exercise or play, as this could lead to stomach dilation and torsion (also known as bloat), which is a life threatening condition requiring immediate veterinary intervention. For owners of breeds which are thought to be susceptible to this condition, you should seek advice from your breeder, vet and/or breed club on further precautionary measures.
- Leave your puppy in peace while it is eating from its bowl. Taking the bowl away while it is eating causes anxiety and this can lead to food aggression. If you want to be sure that your puppy is comfortable with you approaching it during mealtimes, add a little food to the bowl while it is eating, so it sees you as an asset, rather than a threat.
- Never feed your dog from the table or your plate, as this encourages drooling and attention seeking behaviours, such as begging and barking.

Potential Toxins/Poisons (this list is by no means complete and always consult your vet if you puppy ingests anything it shouldn't)

- Alcohol
- Bones
- Chocolate
- Coffee/Caffeine
- Raw Egg
- Green parts of tomato plants
- Grapes/Raisins/
- Artificial sweeteners
- Human vitamins and supplements
- Liquorice
- Milk/Lactose
- Mouldy food
- Onions, chives and garlic
- Raw or undercooked meat
- Slug pellets

- Yeast

The Kennel Club aims to promote the health, happiness and general wellbeing of all dogs, and to provide you with an invaluable resource for every aspect of life with your dog.

To find out more, visit us today at www.thekennelclub.org.uk

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