

Caring For Your Dog

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This book is a common sense guide to dog owner basics. In practical advice books, like anything else in life, there are no guarantees of any kind made. Readers are cautioned to rely on their own judgment about their individual circumstances to act accordingly.

This book is not intended for use as a source of basics of dog ownership. All readers are advised to seek services of competent professionals in the perspective fields.

You are encouraged to print this book for easy reading.

1. Understanding ingredients

Understanding the ingredients of your dog's food items is a must for the dog lovers or dog owners. Whenever you feed the dog with different kinds of food items, you should always read the label and understand the contents about the dog feed types that are being used in such commercial preparations. You should understand the ingredients while buying food for your dog and also know what to look for.

Feed items include dry and fresh food. The fresh dog food that is prepared in homes generally consists of ingredients like freshly cut chicken pieces in addition to the cranberry juices, blue-green algae, etc.

If you come across any different kinds of preservatives and if the dog develops all of a sudden signs pertaining to the food allergy, suspect the unwanted ingredient in the feed items given. Similarly, understand about the moisture status. If the food item is having more moisture, then the dog may prefer this as well.

Beet pulp, pasta, Soy bean oil, wheat middlings, calcium carbonate, magnesium oxide, copper sulphate, iron sulphate, zinc oxide, choline chloride, etc. are often the ingredients in case of vegetarian based diet items offered to the pet animals like dogs.

Raw egg, chicken, beef, mutton, fish, quail etc. are often the preferred ingredients in case of dog diets that are prepared on the basis of the non-vegetarian items. Taurine is one of the essential ingredients for the dog's nutrition. Like wise, in the case of dogs feed with frozen fish items, the vitamin called thiamine needs to be supplemented as an ingredient.

Many premium type of dog food preparations contain essential fatty acids, carbohydrates with adequate fiber contents, vitamins like A, D, E and B complex vitamins.

Furthermore, minerals like zinc, is an essential ingredient for skin health status and calcium, which is an essential ingredient for bone growth, tonicity of muscles. They should be enriched in these food items. However, the cost of those food preparations are comparatively more expensive than the food preparations with general ingredients. Though it may be better for your dog's health.

2. Dogs need different diets at different ages

Dogs need different diets at different ages. Yes. This is true. For example, the puppy needs milk as the major food item while an adult dog may need beef or chicken in addition to the boiled egg and milk. So depending on the age factor, the diet schedule varies in reality for the dogs like any other species.

Puppies need greater amounts of protein, fat and carbohydrates than an adult dogs. Furthermore, puppies need more frequent feeding schedules in a day, unlike an adult dog. The movement based requirements of diet are more in the case of puppies, since they are often more active than the adult dogs.

Elder dogs need restricted protein but the protein needs to be easily digestible and easily assimilated in the body. The diet schedule should have ample supply of water for them. Feeding aged dogs too much protein may finally lead to over burden to the renal structures and ultimately, the dog may end up damaging filters in the kidney.

This is true especially when the immune system of these dogs is compromised due to many factors. Similarly, the elderly dogs need less food only because the movements of the adult dogs are highly restricted and hence, they have to spend a limited of energy.

Female dogs in the pregnancy stage need not be fed a full stomach since it may cause some discomforts to the animal. However, the pregnant animal and the nursing animal need special type of food items that deliver a balanced type of nutrition with proper supplementation of vitamins and minerals.

The nursing animal with puppies need to be fed with enough amounts of calcium and hence, there will not be any calcium based deficiency and the bones of the puppies will be strong without any curving.

3. Vitamin and mineral supplements

Vitamin and mineral supplements are the most important components in any dog's feeding. If there is a balance in the vitamin and mineral supplements, then the animal will have a healthy life and hence, the immunity is not compromised in an unwanted way. This simply means that there the dog will be more disease resistance against various diseases.

Pet owners should know that vitamins A, D, E, and K are the fat-soluble vitamins and others are water-soluble vitamins. Vitamins like thiamine, pyridoxine and cyanocobalamin are important for the functions of nervous system. Deficiency of vitamin A leads to night blindness and skin lesions and deficiency of vitamin D leads to the softening and weakening of the bones.

These problems are many a time encountered by the dog owners. Among these, vitamin A toxicities may occur if you feed them in excessive amounts, like vitamin D. Hence, give emphasis on this while you are using these vitamins in the dogs. Cod liver oil from selected fishes has more vitamin A in them and are universally good feed for dogs.

All dogs may not need supplements of minerals or vitamins to live well for the moment, but it is important for their future. If they become sick or aged or very young without proper feeding, supplementations are required for the upkeep of health status in them. However, one has to follow the instructions of veterinarian in this regard.

If the dogs are fed with fish in frozen conditions, then they may be suffering constantly from vitamin B1 deficiency and hence, such dogs need to be given specifically B1. Careless supplementations of minerals may lead to diseases and hence, veterinarians always need to be consulted on the supplementation of minerals or vitamins.

Minerals like calcium, magnesium, zinc, manganese, iron, copper etc. are given more emphasis in addition to sodium and potassium. Zinc is related to skin health and potassium is related to the muscle health and calcium with phosphorus is related to the bone health.

However, if you feed the dog with chicken, mutton or beef along with required vegetables, artificial supplementation of mineral or vitamin tablets may be highly reduced but supplements need to be thought of when you

are not able to maintain a balanced nutrition as this happens with most of the dogs, due to multifaceted causes.

4. Boredom and variety

Boredom and variety are always inter connected in case of dog misbehaving. Yes. This is true. Many a times, boredom can be managed with variety of materials that will distract the animals to a greater extent. Hence, the dog may not do the abnormal or unwanted activity arising out of the boredom experienced by it.

Boredom experienced dogs may have different types of behavioral patterns. For example, some dogs will be seen barking continuously and some may be engaged always in some digging activities.

There are many ways to get your dog out of its boredom activities. Many toys are available which simulated duck, dog, rodent etc.

These may be kept inside the crate and in particular, puppies love these items. A buster cube with multiple treats may be placed in the dog's shelter and the animal soon understands on how to roll the buster cube to get the treats it prefers. A Buster Cube is an ingenious toy use for simulating and activating your dog during play and feed time. Instead of placing the food monotonously in one place, change the place of feeding suddenly.

Such actions will be helpful for removing the boredom like activity in your dog. Activities pertaining to boredom need to be redefined well by the dog owners. This will help them to a greater extent to drive away the unwanted behavior patterns in their pet dogs.

For example, some dogs may often have destructive biting characters and will be seen biting chair, cloth, mats, and everything that can see. After ruling out the teething problem if it is a puppy, provide it with some large sized balls, mineral mixture based bone materials, etc. Such variety of materials help to reduce the boredom related activities.

5. Cost of feeds

The cost of dog feed is one factor that is most important in the case of feeding of dogs with different kinds of food items. Yes. This is true. The cost factor needs to be looked into in various perspectives during the preparation of the food items, required for the balanced feeding of dogs with proper vitamin and mineral supplementations in the food.

Cost will not always matter much because the dog's value is being assessed in terms of companionship and the happiness derived from the dog to the dog owner. Though the cost of the food items is comparatively more, many dog owners don't mind much due to the increased benefits derived from their dogs in terms of protection, guiding, etc.

Selection of ingredients for the home made food needs to be however based on the quality factor. Even when the quality is more, general persons may seek some cheaper items only. Recommended nutrient contents may be obtained from the national nutrient academies in all nations and this will provide guidelines.

One can correlate the cost factor with items available in their own country. Generally, the commercial food items are expensive especially the ones that use the modern technologies of food preparation like oven-baking, sterilization of cans, air drying or freeze drying of contents etc.

Canned items cost more than the dry food items. However, the cost of the items depends on what kind of food item to be used for the dogs. Food allergies need to be monitored during usage of different food items in case of dogs due to the cheaper cost of the items. Often the quality need not be compromised because of the cost factor.

Most of the dog food items nowadays have mentioned their cost in the label itself. Hence, the dog owner need not have any problem in taking a decision on the purchase.

6. Dry vs. Canned food

These types of food materials are different with different grades of liking by the dogs. Dogs like dry foods only if they are tasty only and however, on comparison, the dogs prefer only the canned food items. Reason for such preference by the dogs is that in case of canned food items, the moisture is about seventy to eighty per cent but in case of dry food, it is only about ten per cent.

However, if you view it in terms of nutrients, often the dry food contains nearly ninety per cent nutrients whereas the canned food items contain only less per cent of nutrients and most of the times. It is only soy products that are structured so well to look like meat pieces.

Hence, to make up the nutritional balance in the body systems, the dog has to eat more amounts of canned food materials than the dry food materials. Hence, just compare the cost factor related to this feature by you. Many dry food items are soybean and rice based.

Now some dry food items are based on corn. Sometimes, beef based or chicken based food items come in the cans along with mineral and vitamin supplements suited for the upkeep of the dog's health status. Larger dogs that weigh more than thirty pounds need to be fed with semi moist food items or dry food items in most of the occasions.

This is to satisfy the food receptors in the stomach. This is due to the fact that the larger dogs need to eat plenty of moist food or the canned food items to satisfy these criteria. But it may not be practically possible in these larger dogs. The small sized dogs may have a satisfactory level of nutrients if fed even the moist food items. However, the caloric density of the dry food should not be forgotten. Enriched dry food items are highly welcome ones than the non -enriched food items.

7. Home made diets

Home made diets are important in the dog feeding. Many a times, the commercial diets consist of food items that have artificial coloring agents and flavoring agents that are harmful to the dog's body. Home made food items have the guarantee of freshness in the preparation unlike the ready-made commercial items.

The preservatives added in the commercial food items may not be the suitable ones to the dogs from the health point of view. Even in case of renal diseases in dogs, the home made diets may be made with ground beef, slices of bread, calcium carbonate, boiled eggs etc.

The purpose is to have the restricted protein supply in the feed items prepared. This should be carried out with home made diets prepared exclusively for the dogs suffering from renal diseases. Water is added in sufficient quantities to help the proper metabolism in the digestion-impaired renal cases.

The dog may have allergic symptoms like severe itching, which may not get corrected by different kinds of medications employed over a period of time. Such cases may get easily treated once the dog food is changed from the commercial type of food to the home made food items.

Often, the home made food items are prepared using the freezing procedures to kill the germs or by adding grape seed extracts to provide sufficient antioxidants to the home made food items. Food grade vinegar is also added in many times to the meat pieces prepared in a fresh manner. All these can be enriched with vitamin supplements that are available in fruit essences, fish oil etc.

Cranberry juice, bananas, fish and meat are prepared in a quality manner and no preservatives are added during the preparation of these kinds of food items and the dog becomes more active after the consumption of such food items.

8. Food allergies

Food allergies are something that is difficult to identify unless one is well aware of the baseline information with regard to this type of allergy. The main symptoms of food allergies in dogs include the facial itching, limb chewing, belly itching, recurrent ear infections or skin infections.

Since the dogs consume lot of prepared food materials including various kinds of proteins, fillers, coloring agents and more; in the commercial food materials, the incidences of food allergies are more than one can imagine. Allergic reactions mostly involve the skin or the gastro intestinal tract.

If you come across your dog itching after the provision of specific food materials, then suspect the food allergy in this animal. However, conditions like fungal infections need to be ruled out in general before the conclusion of itching as a sign of food allergy.

There are many recorded incidences of allergies of dogs to corn or to wheat. However, the food allergies vary from dog to dog. Read the labels clearly before feeding your dogs with pet food materials, in such occasions. Too much colored food materials may be avoided since they may cause allergies to your dog.

Food allergies are often linked to the hyper active behavior noticed in the dogs. Added colors, preservatives, and high fat diet might cause such food allergies in the dogs and hence, one has to be careful in providing new kind of diet to their dogs and closely monitor the dog for any signs of allergy.

There are many occasions that food allergies might be diagnosed in the dogs but the dog may have other problems like pancreatitis. To rule out the food allergies, observation your dogs everytime you feed them, look for reasons to link the signs of dog with food given, specific signs encountered, differential diagnosis etc. are the important features to be given emphasis.

9. How much should I feed my dog?

Many people will give different types of answers based on their experience with their dogs. However, the scientific facts related to the feeding aspects in case of dogs need to be given emphasis during the feeding activities maintained in case of dogs.

Usually the puppies should not be separated before they are eight weeks old. However, some times the orphaned puppies may exist. Usually about five percent of the body weight may be taken as criteria for the quantity of food to be given to the puppies. However, the amount that is consumed by the dog varies with size of the dogs also.

However, one can have a thumb rule of feeding the puppy goes until you see visible fullness of the abdomen to a moderate degree. If you are going on feeding the animal without giving emphasis to the animal's stomach appearance, then the puppy may experience some kinds of digestive upsets and the diarrhea may occur in them.

This may cause many inconveniences to the owner as well as the puppy. Unlike adult dogs, the puppies need to be fed with restricted amounts of food but in more frequencies. However, once the age advances, the amount may be increased to some extent but the frequency of feeding is often decreased in many occasions.

A dog on a raw diet may consume only two to four percent of their body weight. Just observe closely the feeding pattern of the dog and the body condition of the animal. If the dog becomes obese, just reduce the quantity of food and if the dog becomes thin, then have an increase in the feeding items.

As mentioned earlier, puppies and adolescent dogs eat more than the adult dogs. Likewise the geriatric dog eats less than the adult dog due to the reduced movements of the dog. However, remember to restrict the amounts of protein during the feeding of diet to the aged dogs.

10. How often should I feed my dog?

This often becomes an important question asked by many dog lovers and dog owners. If it is a puppy within age of the first six weeks, the puppies need to be given milk at the rate of five to seven times per day. The puppy will make some sound if it wants to feed in general.

However, the feeding frequency may be reduced when the dog becomes six to eight weeks old. By the time the dog assumes the age of four weeks, it may start taking of some solid food. Hence, mix the solid food with water in majority and feed your puppy once or twice in the beginning and if the dog develops some diarrhea, then delay the feeding.

Most of the times, it is due to trial and error but taking some basic steps in feeding, so you need to watch out. The feeding frequency may be changed to two to three times after the assumption of age of eight weeks. However, if the dog is seen hungry craving for food, then provide food once than the estimated numbers. This varies with different breeds of dogs.

However, avoid feeding too many times in this age group of dogs. Around three months to six months of age, the puppy will be teething. Hence, restrict the feeding to two times only but the balanced type of nutrition needs to be provided to the dogs of this age group to avoid the deficiency based symptoms in them.

From six months to one year, try using puppy food that is available commercially. However, from first year onwards, the adult food may be given gradually. However, when the dog becomes an elder dog, restrict the frequency of feeding since the movements of such adult dogs are highly reduced due to multiple reasons. However, the pregnant animal may be fed an extra time depending on the willingness of the animal and restrict the quantity of the food but without compromising on the quality of food.

11. Signs of Ill health

Signs of ill health are the most important signs of the health status in your dogs. For example, if the dog has continuous nasal discharge, it indicates the presence of nasal congestion and if the discharge is thick, most of the times, the dog may have pneumonia.

If the dog vomits one or two times occasionally, this may not be taken as a serious sign of ill health but if the dog continues this vomiting, then this is something significant to be looked into.

If the dog has continuous itching, then one needs to check up the dog first by closer observation and examination of skin by separating the hair material especially in case of long haired breeds. You may also come across a lot of ticks or lice on skin, which may look apparently normal at a distance.

If the dog passes loose stool for one or two times, this need not be given more emphasis but if there is continuous passing of loose stool, then the dog is understood to suffer from bowel disorders. If the dog does not pass stool for two to three days, the digestive upsets needs to be ruled out carefully.

Just patiently observe the dog's walking movements and rule out any abnormal movements in the dog. If the dog is limping, the animal may have foot lesions. Similarly, if the aged dog has reluctant walking and less feed intake along with repeated vomiting, then acute renal disorders like nephritis needs to be ruled out.

If there is whiteness in eyes, suspect the corneal opacity that may occur in diseases like trypanasomosis. When the dog becomes anemic, the mucous membrane of the eyes becomes paler and in severe cases, this may have wall white color. If the dog bites chain and owners or others, look for behavior disorders and rabies needs to be ruled out.

12. Heart worm, fleas and other parasites

Heart worm, fleas and other parasites in dogs need to be eliminated by following appropriate medications in them. Many products have come up in the commercial fields to protect the dogs from heart worms, fleas and other parasites like hook worms, whip worms, round worms, lice, ticks etc.

Among the heart worm, fleas and other parasites, the fleas produce the hyper sensitive reactions in the affected animals. Hence, the animals infested with fleas start severely scratching of body. Many times, the scratching is so severe and the skin becomes more hyperemic and dermatitis occurs in the affected areas.

Animal will not lie down or sleep comfortably due to the constant bites by the fleas. Hence, animal looks as if affected by some severe skin disease. If the animal is not properly attended for this tick bite problem, there will be often secondary bacterial invasions in these sites and there may even be a bad smell emanating from the skin areas.

Close observation of the dog is highly essential to rule out the occurrence of fleas disturbing the animal to a greater extent. Similarly, the skin of the animal needs to be tested for the presence of ticks, lice etc. For this, the hair materials need to be separated and the close observation with patience is required for the proper diagnosis.

In many incidences, if anemia is present, the blood protozoa need to be ruled out in addition to the hookworm problems. The clinical problems like anemia, loose motion, pot belly etc. might be recognized by the dog owners themselves and however, the dog needs to undergo the routine health related examination involving fecal examination, hematological examination and blood smear examination.

Many commercial products have come up in the market, which are useful to deal with all these conditions by single dose. Drugs like ivermectin are highly useful and are available in both injection and oral form in addition to the solution form that can be applied on the skin. These drugs in dogs can lead to the prophylaxis of these conditions also.

13. Heart worm prevention

Beef flavored chunks are available in addition to the beef flavored tablets or solutions that can be given orally to the dogs as a measure against the incidence of heart worms. Avoid mosquito bites by providing proper mosquito-proof shelter facilities to the dogs.

Just plan whether there is any need to go for the heart worm prevention though out the year or only in some months of the year. For example, in case of some countries, the mosquitoes may be dormant in most of the colder months.

However, in some countries, this is not a position. Many a times, medications are available for oral administration to prevent heart worms along with hookworms etc. Such oral medications need to be taken as per the instructions. However, be cautious about the occurrence of any adverse drug reactions in the dog given with such prophylactic therapy.

Adverse event reports need to be sent if you come across any sorts of adverse drug reactions in your dog during the preventive treatment. Soft beef flavored tablets are highly preferred by the pet animals as the preventive measure against heart worms. The pet owner needs to consult a veterinarian if the dose for the prophylaxis of heart worm is missed for few months. In such occasions, the pet animal needs to undergo the heart worm test.

Heartgard, sentinel, interceptor, revolution, etc. are available in the commercial fields as drugs for the preventive measure. Avoid water stagnation around the dog shelter and the bushes around the area that facilitate mosquito breeding. This test needs to be carried out in consultation with a veterinarian who is specialized in the pet animal health care and medicine.

As a preventive measure for the heart worms, the dogs need to be tested for the evidence of these worms at an age of six months. Real beef chew able tablets are available containing medical agent like ivermectin.

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