

Making Your Dog a Vegetarian

Contributed by Admin
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During the last few decades many people have, justifiably,, decided to remove meat and dairy products from their diets. Whether they determine to become a vegan or a vegetarian, most feel their decision has improved their physical and spiritual well-being.

Many of these people also own one or more dogs. Because of their personal philosophies and their own satisfactory dietary experiences, many then decide to feed their dogs a diet derived exclusively from sources that exclude meat and dairy products.

But is this decision a good one, from their pet's perspective?

Humans are omnivores. We are provided with saliva that contains various enzymes to predigest the starches in our diet, specific teeth to grind and breakdown the plant fibers we eat and a digestive tract of medium length. In addition, our jaws work in a manner that allows them to move not only in an up and down direction, but also from side to side, so we can easily eat foods derived from both plant and animal origins.

Dogs, on the other hand, are carnivorous. Unlike us, the jaws of dogs can only move up and down. Canine teeth are pointy and sharp, having evolved for tearing animal tissue, as opposed to the grinding of plant matter. Canine's saliva does not contain enzymes for breaking down grainy foods and they have a digestive tract that is short, for easy digestion of animal proteins and fats.

Besides these basic physiological differences between dogs and humans, there are a number of other concerns the dog owner should be aware of if considering placing their pet on a vegetarian diet. We'll touch on just a few of them here:

* If the owner's concern is to ensure that their dog will not suffer from high cholesterol or heart disease as do humans whose diets are high in meat intake, they should be aware that dogs do not suffer from coronary disease or cholesterol problems at anywhere near the incidence humans do. So cutting out meat and dairy products from the dog's diet may not provide any benefit.

* Dogs require a high amount of proteins, which are needed to support proper organ growth. Proteins are comprised of different amino acids. The best source of the required proteins is from animal sources. While there do exist some plant sources such as soy that contain high protein levels, the amino acids within soy are not as well-balanced as those derived from animals. Specifically, dogs require taurine and l-carnitine found in meat products. While one can add taurine and l-carnitine to a dog's diets, this raises another concern. Animal sources hold more protein, gram for gram, than do starches, grains or

vegetables. So in order for the dog to get the required amount of taurine and l-carnitine, they will have to ingest a much greater quantity of food daily, which can lead to obesity and other health problems.

* Another essential nutrient required by dogs for good health is vitamin B12, which is not found in most plants.

While theoretically a dog owner can supplement his pet's diet with nutrients to overcome these dietary deficiencies, it can be expensive to do so. In addition, it is very difficult to monitor the amounts and the balance between the nutrients when they are inserted into an animal's diet not through natural foods, but with supplementation.

The bottom line is that dog owners should think seriously before putting their pets on a purely non-animal based diet. Prior to changing their dog's diet in such a fundamental manner, they should first consult with their veterinarian as well as thoroughly research the issue. Then, if they do make the decision to do so, they should strictly monitor the dog's health on an ongoing basis and should any problems be observed, revisit the veterinarian.

About the Author

Michael Rupkalvis manages the TakeCareofYourPet web site. The website discusses a new product called Hope for Pets nutrition, an all-natural powder that is the very best natural supplement on the market to aid in promoting healthier and lengthier lives for our dogs.