

# Nutritional Counseling

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Many problems in our pets can be related to the food they eat. From allergies to obesity, we can find or design a diet just right for your pet.

Owners should take advantage of the opportunity during any physical examination of their pet to talk to their veterinarian about the diet. There are many misconceptions and myths regarding raw vs. cooked foods, grains vs. meats and vegetables, and canned vs. kibble (dry) diets.

A common phrase heard in exam rooms is “I don’t know why Fluffy’s teeth are so dirty - she eats only dry dog food, and we don’t give her any people food at all!” There are several different issues brought up by that statement. One common misconception is that all dry food cleans pets’ teeth. There is only one dry food that is proven to help clean soft plaque off animals’ teeth - Hill’s Science Diet t/d. The kibble is designed with interwoven fibers that don’t crumble like traditional kibble, and so actually will scrape the teeth and stimulate the gums. Wet food doesn’t necessarily create bad teeth and gums (a lot of it is genetic), and in some cases wet or soft food is preferable for the pet to eat.

The second part of the above statement is regarding the feeding of “human” food to dogs and cats. For the most part, there is nothing wrong with adding raw or lightly steamed vegetables (NO ONIONS!) to the food you feed your dog. A little plain white or brown rice, some plain pasta, low-fat cottage cheese or plain

yogurt can really jazz up an otherwise bland meal, adding flavour and nutrients. Faced with a picky eater? Try some lean (cooked) ground beef or chicken mixed in to the regular diet - most dogs dig right in. When introducing new foods in to the diet, start with one at a time and pay attention to what your dog really likes, and if anything upsets his tummy. If he develops loose stool or vomits after a new addition, put that on the “DON’T FEED” list and try something else. Cats may like a bit of variety as well, but tend to be more sensitive to diet changes. If you know your cat has a delicate stomach, stay away from too many vegetables or dairy products. Dr. Leah’s cat Armley will eat almost anything - including tortilla chips, lettuce, peas, and carrots! (Don’t tell anyone she lets her cat eat tortilla chips!)

Cats, dogs and exotic pets all have extremely different nutritional requirements, and as pets age their requirements change constantly. Most good-quality pet food manufactures make diets specific for the type of animal and their life stage.