

Do you know what you are feeding your pet?

Have you checked the ingredients in your pet's food? Do you know what is in it? Vague descriptions like "cereals, animal derivatives, vegetable derivatives" do not give you enough information and mean that the manufacturer can change the ingredients dependant on the cheapest available at the time. It is changes like these which can upset your pet's digestion, with side effects like skin problems; and you as the pet owner may not make a link with the food, as you have not changed anything in your pet's diet.

Our pets need a regular supply of food in order to stay health, much like we do. This needs to include a form of energy, the most efficient of which is fat; this is quickly converted in the body to a useful form of energy. Carbohydrates and proteins also provide energy but to a lesser extent. The basic building blocks of life are provided by amino acids in protein, an increased amount of protein is needed during periods of growth, pregnancy and lactation but too much can lead to it being converted to fat. Vitamins and minerals are also required in the correct amounts in order to regulate the body processes. These include calcium for healthy bones and teeth and iron and copper to maintain the normal activities of the blood cells.

Many skin and digestive disorders can be linked to improper diet. Many pet foods use Soya and other vegetable proteins which are difficult to digest, rather than animal proteins which are easier to digest. Wheat is more difficult to digest than rice, and many dogs seem to have an intolerance to wheat. The best food to promote healthy digestive function should be easily digested, high in complex carbohydrate with moderate levels of protein and fat.

Results of poor diet show up as skin problems, behavioural problems, allergies, itchy ears, bad breath, body odours and anal gland problems. Most of these can be alleviated by switching to a healthy natural food for your pets. The results of switching to a natural healthy food can be noticed within a few weeks, skin problems clear up; coats become shiny and healthy; doggy odours go; flatulence disappears and there is less waste to clear up!

There is a growing range of natural pet foods available. It is always advised to research all food products in detail before deciding just as you would for yourself. At Paws4Pets, we personally researched all products before settling on the ones below as being, in our opinion, the best for our pets.

BURNS REAL FOOD has been designed to provide the same quality as home cooked food but with the added convenience of not having to cook it yourself. The statement from John Burns, who developed the food, says "I have formulated Burns using only ingredients which will promote good health and vitality in our pets. Levels of protein, fat and minerals are controlled to meet the needs and avoid excess". The main ingredient is brown rice; the main protein sources are human grade chicken, ocean fish and duck. Sunflower oil, chicken oil and fish oil are high in essential fatty acids and seaweed provides a source of organic minerals. It contains no battery chicken meat, wheat, sugar, Soya, colourings, flavourings or genetically modified ingredients.

ARDEN GRANGE has the same quality ingredients, the same human grade chicken and fish. Arden Grange is a very good choice for our older pets as it comes with a few sensible additives including brewers yeast and dried egg, as well as Glucosamine, Chondroitin and MSM which promotes healthy joints. By having these actually in the food it saves purchasing them as an extra, thus saving time and money but still giving our pets the best help we can.

NATUREDIET is a natural moist food equivalent. It contains healthy ingredients, fresh meat, carrots, brown rice and is a special blend containing the correct nutritional balance of vitamins and minerals for a healthy pet. It comes in sealed packs, which have been cooked to a temp of

125degrees. It is cooked from raw thus there is far less damage to the product and a higher retention of the enzymes and nutrients normally destroyed by processing food.

All of the above are readily available in the Algarve at Paws 4 Pets in Silves, Terra Da Harmonia health shop in Luz, Food Fayre in Messines, Dapper Dogs in Lagos and Merrylegs near Loule/Almancil.

There is a preconception that feeding a natural quality food is expensive but when you compare the amount that you need to feed then the price is comparative and often cheaper. High quality natural foods do not need to be fed in the same volume because more of the food is used to feed the body and therefore less is expelled as waste. With food bulked out with cereals you have to feed in a larger volume in order that your pet gets the correct nutrients, and therefore more is expelled as waste. So when comparing foods you have to take into account the price per day that the pet needs to be fed. Burns, for example, can be fed as cheaply as €0.63 per day for an average 20kg dog, (based on purchasing a 15kg bag at €47 and feeding the recommended 10g per kilo of dog per day, i.e. 200g per day) Arden Grange works out at 0.78€ per day, whereas other market favourites work out at over 1.00€ per day for the same 20kg dog

Visit Paws 4 Pets for more information and samples of these natural foods. We are also in the process of importing other natural pet foods and expanding our existing popular range.

Happy Eating!

Protect your pet with knowledge

Jan Cobley

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