

PUPPY NUTRITION - ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW



Sell puppy food? Offer your customers essential advice from the PFMA's Nicole Paley

Puppies have a lot of growing up to do in a relatively short space of time. They have to develop their muscles, bones, skin and fur, teeth and internal organs very rapidly, as well as learn the important skills of socialisation. Getting the diet right from this early stage will set them in great stead for this amazing period of growth.

PUPPIES HAVE VERY SPECIFIC NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

During weaning a puppy will gradually switch from getting all its nutrients from his mother's milk to needing them in his solid food. Our nutrition experts highlight that in the first six months or so, the nutrient needs are changing very quickly and they leave very little margin for error. This often happens at the same time as neutering, which means they'll need fewer calories. It is important that the nutrients and calories he obtains from his food are all present and correctly balanced for optimal development as well as being both highly digestible and palatable. By feeding a specially designed puppy food, owners can have complete confidence they're addressing all their puppy's nutritional needs.

DO ALL PUPS HAVE THE SAME NUTRITIONAL NEEDS?

Depending on physical size and breed, puppies will mature at different rates and have different

nutritional needs. For instance, rapid growth occurs during the first few months in all breeds but is prolonged in large and giant breeds, for example great danes, labrador retrievers, and doberman pinschers. Whilst most of the breeds mature around 12 months of age, in large and giant breeds it may take up to two years to reach adult size. In addition to general puppy foods there are diets tailored for small, medium or large breed dogs, along with a range of breed specific foods.

PUPPY DIETS FOR LARGE BREEDS

Generally speaking, larger breed puppies need fewer calories per unit of body weight and mature at a slower rate compared to smaller breed puppies. Taking on too many calories can lead to an accelerated growth rate and excessive weight gain. Both accelerated growth rate and excessive weight puts increased stress on the skeletal system of growing large breed puppies.

Large-breed puppy foods are designed for gradual, healthy growth and are often lower in calcium and phosphorus than other puppy foods to help avoid skeletal problems developing.

Some large breed puppy foods may contain special ingredients to help control appetite, which can help reduce the risk of developmental skeletal problems.

Large breed puppies might also be self-restricting but their food intake and weight needs to be monitored.

PUPPY DIETS FOR SMALL BREEDS

Small breed puppies by comparison have a very fast growth rate and need up to double the amount of energy per unit body weight compared to an adult dog. Often specific small breed puppy diets will have increased levels of protein and fat, as well as increased vitamin B to help them with these elevated energy levels.

HOW TO FEED

Puppies need to be fed little and often, taking small portions from their daily food ration to be given at regular intervals throughout the day.

Customers should feed their puppy four meals a day up until the age of four months, and then reduce its feed to three meals a day until it is six months old, when they can change to two meals a day, and keep it on this regime for the rest of its life. Always take care not to overfeed and

take portions from the daily food ration, which has been measured out.

- Any left over wet food should be taken and thrown away after 30 minutes. The dish should then be washed before used at another mealtime.
- Dry food can be left in the dish for longer but remember the food will become less palatable the longer it is left out.
- Owners should make sure their puppy always has a good supply of fresh water available.
- It's useful to monitor a dog's weight on an ongoing basis. Habits change frequently and it's good to keep an eye on their body size by using our Dog Size-O-Meter.

Please visit www.pfma.org.uk for healthy pet tools and resources including weight logs, food diaries, with feeding tips and general information on a range of topics from pet food ingredients to pet food labels. 🐾

Dog Size-O-Meter

Results:

Your Dog is score Very Thin 1	Your pet is very likely to be underweight. Your pet may have a metabolic bone disease but we recommend you speak to your local vet to rule out any underlying medical reasons such as an infection thyroid gland. If your pet is healthy but otherwise underweight, your pet is likely to absorb some dietary and lifestyle changes.
Your Dog is score Thin 2	Your pet is thin and potentially underweight. Your pet may have a naturally thin physique but we recommend you speak to your local vet for a health check up. If your pet is healthy but otherwise underweight, your pet may absorb some dietary and lifestyle changes.
Your Dog is score Ideal 3	Congratulations your pet is in ideal body condition! This is great news, as research has shown that pets at their ideal body condition can live up to ten years longer. To keep your dog in perfect shape, monitor its weight and body condition on a regular basis by reduced exercise, correct surgery, extra treats, or even factors such as stress can result in weight change.
Your Dog is score Overweight 4	Your pet is potentially overweight. Being overweight is unhealthy for pets as it can lead to a shortened lifespan, heart disease, arthritis and diabetes. Speak to your local vet for advice and a thorough health check-up. The vet will look for any underlying health issues, a change of diet and lifestyle is likely to be suggested. Many pet practices run free weight management consultations, ask about these services when you go in to book an appointment.
Your Dog is score Obese 5	Your pet is likely to be obese and this can have serious medical implications. Being overweight is unhealthy for pets as it can lead to a shortened lifespan, heart disease, arthritis and diabetes. Speak to your local vet for advice and a thorough health check-up. The vet will look for any underlying medical reasons as to why your pet may be too heavy. If there are no underlying health issues, a weight loss programme will probably be individually developed for your pet and should include diet and lifestyle changes.

Remember to make the most of advice on weight management offered by many vets practices and pet care professionals.

pfma
pet food manufacturers association
www.pfma.org.uk

For more information on the Dog Size-O-Meter and tips on how to prevent weight gain visit www.pfma.org.uk. In addition to providing useful tips on how to keep your pet healthy and happy, a team of veterinary nutrition experts are on hand to answer your pet nutrition questions in the 'Ask the Expert' section.