A Homemade Diet for Your Pets

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujztdcXm1Qg

Hello this is Dr. Karen Becker and today we’re going to discuss “why to prepare a homemade diet?”

Reasons for Making a Homemade Diet

There are lots of really obvious good reasons why you want to make a homemade diet but I would say the no. 1 reason people consider making a homemade diet for their pets is because you know exactly what’s in the food. Surprisingly or not surprisingly, the USDA nor the FDA nor AFCO (American Association of Food Control Officers) controls or dictates what private pet food companies put in their food.

What that means is you have to trust the private pet food companies to be able to tell you the truth, no. 1. And you have to trust that what they say is in the labels is really in the label.

Pet food regulation is up to each state so each state does enforce some codes and it doesn’t pertain to quality, absorbability or digestibility. So, the pet food industry is pretty loosely regulated and of course people that have had problems with pet foods are pretty leery in terms of quality.

There are lots of big names out there, many pet foods that veterinarians are telling you to feed that you’ve had negative experiences with and of course that causes you to doubt all pet foods. I am not saying that there aren’t some quality pet foods available but many people have lost trust in the pet food industry and they’re interested in making their own pet food.

My concern as a veterinarian is if you want to make a homemade diet, it has to be done right. It has to be balanced. The biggest issue I see is that the people who are getting fed up or having a negative experience with the pet food company end up providing a homemade diet for the pets that is unbalanced and actually you can do a whole lot of damage feeding an unbalanced food. So, it’s really important to me that the food is balanced.

Unless the dog food or cat food bag that you are purchasing says that it’s made with human-grade ingredients, it probably isn’t. That’s another big reason for making your own food. You have complete control of what goes into your pet’s mouth.
If the dog and cat food can or bag that you’re feeding says that it’s made from all-human grade ingredients, you’ll know because it’s going to be 3 times as expensive as foods that are not made from human-grade ingredients. So, unfortunately, crude protein, when you flip over the bag, and when you see crude protein, that can constitute a whole bunch of pieces and parts that can be less than desirable for you to be feeding your pet.

No.2 - the second good reason why you’d want to consider feeding a homemade diet is that it’s species-appropriate. Many of you who are becoming well-educated when it comes to how you need to nourish your dogs and cats recognize that it’s pretty imperative that you don’t feed your carnivores with carbohydrates, including grains, corn, wheat, rice, and soy particularly.

Some of the higher carb veggies can be appropriate in certain situations like if you have a very lean dog or cat that is having problems holding or maintaining its weight, you can consider adding some vegetable sources of carbohydrates. But in terms of grains, dogs and cats don’t have a grain requirement so we recommend that you don’t feed grains to your pets.

It is difficult especially in many parts of the country to find good quality, human-quality, grain-free food. If you do find them, they’re really expensive so that’s another reason why many people have turned to feeding homemade diets. It is actually creating your own dog or cat food is cheaper than feeding a human-grade, quality canned food.

And if you can’t feed a homemade diet, the second most appropriate diet would be a canned food. Dogs and cats were never designed to eat an entirely dehydrated food.

Dry food such as a kibble or a dry crunchy food is entirely dehydrated and that causes a lot of organ stress including kidney and liver degeneration. So, those of you that blog on the HealthyPets forum and those of you that are on the Facebook page, you’ll know that we talk a lot about biologically appropriate, excellent quality, and species-appropriate food, which means it needs to be in the biologically correct form.

The food you feed your dogs and cats should be moisture-rich -- high protein, high moisture, low carbohydrate diet and that can be very difficult to find.

The other great thing about feeding a homemade diet is you can avoid certain chemicals, preservatives, emulsifiers, and FD&C colors that you don’t want to be feeding your pet any way. Many pet foods, even great quality pet foods, add in flavor enhancers, emulsifiers and extra fats that are quite palatable but oftentimes your pets don’t need.

**Advantages of Preparing Homemade Meals for Your Pets**
So, the advantages of home-preparing your pets’ meals are that: you have complete control over the ingredients that go into your pets’ foods; you are able to pick the veggies that you are interested in feeding so you can pick higher antioxidant veggies or certain vegetables that have medicinal properties for your particular pets; and you have complete control over the quality of meat sources that go into your pet foods.

That can be pretty important because let’s say you have a cat that has a known chicken allergy, you can avoid feeding chicken because you are in complete control of picking other protein sources that would naturally be appropriate for your cats. It is also more economical if you’re able to buy in larger quantities when meat and veggies go on sale and you’re able to package foods, let’s say for several weeks or several months even and freeze it.

It can be quite convenient if you pair up with a buddy and make food for all your pets. You’re able to make food for several weeks or months, which actually can end up being quite convenient over the course of several weeks or months if you prepare it adequately.

The other great thing about preparing a homemade diet is that if you follow a recipe, which is what we’re going to recommend you do, you’re going to know in your heart that you’re meeting your pets’ vibrant living food requirement but also feeding them a species-appropriate diet in terms of it being nutrient-balanced, omega fatty acid-rich and vitamin-mineral supplementation in correct proportion.

**About the Book: Real Food for Healthy Dogs & Cats**

So, I have prepared a diet with my pet lifestyle coach and pet nutritionist, Beth Taylor. We’ve written a book, *Real Food for Healthy Dogs & Cats*. The great thing about this particular recipe book is that it’s not only AFCO-compliant, but it’s NRC and Ancestral Diet-compliant, which means it meets the nutritional requirements for all of those organizations for a biologically appropriate, healthy diet for all stages of a pet’s life.

So whether you have a kitten or dog, there are recipes included in this book that will be able to meet your pet’s needs.

The other great thing about this particular recipe book is that if you are novice and the thought of preparing foods for your pets is intimidating, these are easy to follow, balanced recipes that you’ll be able to prepare. There is a lot of nutritional variety and it teaches you how to prepare the food and store it so you are able to do it efficiently.

There’s also a chapter in this book on how to pick healthy treats for your pets because you know treats are important. There’s also a chapter on how to incorporate commercially available raw food diets and how to pick the appropriate raw food diets.
that would be commercially available to incorporate with a homemade feeding schedule if you so desire. One last tidbit that many people ask – they’re interested in preparing a balanced, species-appropriate diet but they’re not necessarily ready for the raw and there are recipes in this book that will help you make a cooked diet.

In addition to making the diet, we show you how to create the essential vitamin-mineral mix from vitamins and minerals that you can purchase from your own health food store, blend together in appropriate quantity then supply it to each batch of diet in the appropriate amounts for your pet’s body weight. That way, you will be able to make the diet nutritionally complete according to all of the standardized organizations’ suggested baseline nutritional requirements.

So, Beth and I are really proud to be able to offer this to you. These homemade diets are not only easy to prepare but they’re so effective in creating vibrant health that we know that when you begin preparing your pet’s food, you’re going to have the confidence in knowing that it’s balanced and your pets will be so excited because for the first time, you will be offering your pet a diet that they’ve never had before. In a species-appropriate form, you will have the confidence in knowing that it’s everything they need coming right from your kitchen.