

TIPS ON FEEDING YOUR DOG

NOTE: This article is adapted from an article by Kathy Partridge, a Golden Retriever breeder, with her permission. She had a lot to say that applies to Airedales and other breeds. I have added some things from Lew Olsen, a Rottweiler breeder with a doctorate in canine nutrition, about carnivore. I believe that there are many different ways to feed our dog,, and what Partridge says about choosing a kibble is excellent information for people who feed kibble..

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIET TO YOUR AIREDALE'S OVERALL HEALTH

DIET AND ORTHOPEDIC PROBLEMS

It has been shown that diet is strongly linked to the development of orthopedic problems in dogs as well as other species. Overfeeding and rapid growth-rate predispose animals to all kinds of problems like osteochondrosis (OCD), hypertrophic osteodystrophy (HOD), panosteitis, and canine hip dysplasia (CHD). But I think there's more to it than that. I believe that feeding for optimum health and growth rate (and by that I mean the growth rate that Nature intended, not that promoted by the purveyors of puppy foods or breeders who want their puppies in the ring and winning by six months of age) are further protection. My feeling is that for bone and muscle to develop normally, the nutrients have to be there in a form that the puppy can assimilate. Again, that means animal proteins from varied sources, preferably in a raw form, as well as fresh vegetable matter, etc. We shouldn't overfeed (particularly in terms of calories), but denying puppies proper, fresh, natural nutrients could also be playing a role in the proliferation of many so-called "genetic" diseases.

At the same time, we cannot deny the fact that there may be, and probably are, genetic bases for many conditions. The smart approach, I think, is to breed as if genetics is everything. Then rear them in such a way as to optimize the genetic potential of the puppies we produce. In short, we must rear them as though husbandry is everything. *That means a species-appropriate diet and, for puppies, only the amount of exercise that they want to do. Instead of long boring walks with their repetitive motion on hard surfaces, let your puppies be puppies, playing in the yard as rough as they wish and letting them stop and sleep whenever they wish.* If we can manage their growth as well as we test for genetic predispositions, we will give our dogs the best chance for a long healthy life. Only then should we consider ourselves as true fanciers of a breed.

DIET AND IMMUNE PROBLEMS

We're constantly hearing these days about the number of immune problems that are affecting dogs. Allergies, cancer, lupus, and thyroid problems, to list just a few, all have a common link - a malfunctioning immune system.

Basically, there are two kinds of immune malfunctions. One is where the immune system gets trigger-happy. Everything it encounters, including the body itself, is perceived as a threat. So everything is attacked - including major organs. This is referred to as an "auto-immune" problem. The immune system has lost the ability to "recognize self" and conditions like arthritis, hypothyroidism, and lupus are a result.

On the other hand, the immune system could be depressed - not attacking much of anything, in which case the body can't protect itself against foreign invaders or faulty cells within the body. If a dog's immune system is not functioning well, it can't defend itself against cancer cells, or invaders like viruses and bacteria.

Much time and energy is spent on hand-wringing over the current number of health problems in many breeds. Cancer is especially worrisome. Many people feel powerless to do anything about it, figuring our only choice is to wait for science to come up with the cure for all these "genetic" problems that beset our dogs.

I disagree. It is my belief that we can do a great deal to prevent or at least delay the onset of cancer and other immune-related problems in our dogs. We can feed for optimum health. A dog in optimum health has

an immune system in optimum health. It's functioning at peak efficiency. It is neither trigger-happy, nor sluggish. It recognizes foreign invaders (and internally, faulty cells that are the early stages of cancer) and reacts quickly to attack them. At the same time, it stays "sane" and realizes that skin, thyroid, and other organs/systems are part of the body and not a threat.

A dog in optimum health does not have fleas, rashes, lick sores, infected ears, etc. These all relate to the skin, the largest and most easily observed organ in the body. Logically, I think we can assume that if the right diet can do all this for the skin, it must also be benefiting the rest of the body—the internal parts we cannot see. Admittedly, this does involve a bit of faith, but in my opinion, it's a much better option than sitting around, waiting for a cure, and keeping our fingers crossed while our dogs die prematurely.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PROTECT YOUR AIREDALE'S HEALTH?

Even though there are hereditary problems that exist in any breed, I believe that many of the chronic problems have their true roots in the commercial diets we feed. Do I have scientific proof of this? No. *But I have begun feeding my Airedales like the carnivores they are.* And I am seeing excellent results.

You might say that the biggest genetic problem that Airedales or any dogs have is that they are dogs: *canis lupus familiaris*, a relative of wolves. Here are some comments from Lew Olson, a Rottweiler breeder who has earned a doctorate in canine nutrition; she is very knowledgeable, on the differences between our digestive systems and canine digestive systems:

- **One carnivore trait is that all teeth are sharp and pointed (like a dogs), and they are not made for chewing.** They are made for tearing. It is the chewing of kibble that creates tartar buildup on dogs teeth. These teeth are not made to have food sit on them. Dogs naturally teeth hunks of food, and using their tongue as a ladle, push the food back whole into the throat. Their tongue is designed to do this. They have no enzymes in their mouth to predigest food, so all digesting is done in their stomach and intestines. In other words, chewing is not important. They tear the food to get it to a size that they can swallow, and then push it down their throats. If it gets stuck, they try to spit it up and start over, eating it again. Omnivores like us have grinding teeth (some or all flat) to grind and chew food for the amylase production in the mouth to begin to digest it.
- **Carnivores, unlike omnivores, do not naturally have a consistent stool.** Carnivore stools can range from white and chalky (if they have consumed bones) to yellow and runny (from eating grass, berries and rotten meat) without the ill effects this would have on a human. Commercial dog food is designed—replete with brown dye—to firm dog stools and make them brown, so owners can feel comfort that their dogs stools look like their own and therefore feel the dogs' stools are normal.... While canine stools can be naturally brown, they can be in a variety of other colors and looseness and firmness and still be considered normal.
- **Finally, dogs digest food much faster than omnivores, and they can digest a fresh food meal in four hours.** Humans, or omnivores, take 12 to 16 hours. Dry dog food, because it contains no digestive enzymes or probiotics and has grain (which needs the digestive enzyme—analyse—to digest it. Dogs have very little analyse), often take up to 16 hours for dogs to digest. Many believe that keeping this waste inside encourages allergies (by creating an autoimmune response), and digestive upsets, and allows toxins to get into the animals system (this is why quick, efficient elimination is so important to a dogs health).

WHAT SHOULD YOU FEED?

Many people want the definitive (and easy) answer to the question: "What's the best food to feed my Airedale?" There is no best food. And despite claims of balanced diets, every dog is an individual with different needs.

It is very important that you learn to think for yourself when it comes to feeding your dog. It is up to you to take responsibility for their nutrition and their health. So ask a lot of people what they think. Read

everything you can. Keep everything in mind. Pay attention to the experts, but remember that the experts also have limited knowledge. And often, science and profits are working together. So keep in mind that in addition to scientists, experienced dog people can offer practical information, and most of them have nothing to gain from the advice they give you.

Then consider what makes sense to you, what makes you comfortable. *Understanding canine nutrition is no more difficult than understanding your children's needs. You can do it.*

Dogs, like their fairly close cousins, the wolves, are carnivores. Domesticated dogs have been around for ten to fifteen thousand years, and we have only had commercial pet food for the past sixty years.

Their wild ancestors ate a diet that consisted almost entirely of high quality animal tissue. Muscle meat, organs, bones, and even skin and hooves. Strictly speaking canines aren't 'true' carnivores because they do consume the partially digested plant matter in the intestinal tracts of their herbivorous prey. But this is a relatively small percentage of their overall intake. However, stop and think for a minute what a moose or caribou or buffalo—the wolves' prey—eat. They roam and graze. They eat grasses, leaves and lichens. They do not, to my knowledge, eat a lot of grains in their mature form—the seed heads—nor do they eat rice or ears of mature corn. If they do so, it would only be seasonally, in the late summer or fall. In addition, no canine has ever been known to cook its food.

Wild canines eat a lot of animal matter with a little plant matter.

KIBBLE GUIDELINES

No matter what you feed your Airedale, you will need to make compromises. If you decide to feed kibble, study the label: Be sure that:

1. The **first** ingredient on the list is a meat or poultry meal (not fresh meat which generally gets to be first on the list because of its 70% water weight).
2. There are **at least two meat or poultry meals in the first four ingredients**. For a 20 – 24 percent protein food, this will be 2 within the first 5 or 6 ingredients.
3. At least **three different animal proteins** in the food, not counting the eggs (for example lamb, chicken and fish).
4. There are **no by-products**
5. There should be **no soy products** of any kind in the food.
6. There should be **minimal duplication of cereals** (e.g., rice gluten, rice flour and brewer's rice is a lot of duplication but many premium foods use this little deception to make it look like they are not using a lot of a particular grain. When you see it, you will know that you are dealing with a cereal-based food.)
7. **No peanut hulls or cellulose** (dogs cannot digest cellulose).
8. The food **must include probiotics**.
9. The food is preserved with vitamin C and vitamin E. This is an area that you may have to compromise in order to get other good ingredients because it is difficult to preserve a high-protein food with these vitamins. In other words, do not choose a grain-based food simply because it is preserved with vitamin C or E. Grain-based foods are a major culprit in dog allergies. By the way, allergies are not due to a lack of prednisone in the body, but vets like to give it to stop the itching. Be careful.
10. There must be **no added ethoxyquin**.
11. **Vitamins and minerals are sequestered or chelated for better absorption**
12. There should be **a list of real food ingredients that is as long as possible**. This is a sign that the company is formulating its products so that the bulk of nutrients come from real food, not just synthetic and/or crude vitamins and minerals.
13. There should be **no sugar** (e.g., sucrose, fructose, etc.).

Of course feeding any commercial food is an exercise in compromise. I don't think there are any that meet all 13 of the above requirements, so do the best you can.

Any kind of By-Product Meal is less desirable because it contains lots of feet, beaks, heads, etc. Not as good as the plain Meals listed above

When in optimum health, dogs do not have allergies, hot spots, lick sores, gastro-intestinal problems, auto-immune diseases or problems, and they are virtually flea-proof.

No matter what you're feeding, if your dogs do not have allergies, hot spots, lick sores, gastro-intestinal problems or fleas, there is probably no reason to switch. But if your animals do suffer with any or all of the above, then you could be doing better.

LAMB & RICE FOODS - THE MYTH OF THE HYPOALLERGENIC DIET

Once upon a time, all readily available commercial dog foods were based on beef, chicken, corn and wheat. You couldn't buy a lamb and rice food "over the counter". Since it is constant and repeated exposure to foods or food ingredients that are the triggering mechanism of allergies, many dogs eventually became allergic to beef, chicken, corn and wheat.

The solution was to put the dog on a lamb and rice food, which at the time, was only available from your vet. The lamb and rice food helped manage these allergic dogs because they hadn't been exposed to it before. Wow! Lamb and rice soon became known as 'hypoallergenic'.

Well intentioned puppy owners decided the smart thing to do was to start their animals on this 'hypoallergenic' formula from the beginning, in the mistaken belief their dogs could never become allergic to it. Not true. Through constant, repeated exposure to lamb and rice, your dog can become just as allergic to these ingredients as any other. Because the lamb and rice foods have been so overused in this regard, the vets now have new, more exotic hypoallergenic formulas to dispense to dogs who are allergic to lamb and rice.

When you feed a dog a diet based on plant-protein, he has to struggle for the nutrition he needs. His system was designed to break-down animal protein. He does not have the complex digestive track that cows or horses have for breaking down plant material. Cooking destroys and alters nutrients, and, in the case of dog food, makes it even more difficult for a dog to do well. In addition, many pet food diets are too alkaline for many breeds and leave the dogs susceptible to bacterial infections, such as recurrent ear infections, staph and bladder infections, and more.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE OR THE REAL AMOUNT OF PROTEIN IN COMMERCIAL DIETS

There's no shortage of protein in commercial dog foods, the problem is, most of it is from cereal grains and that's what gives our dogs such grief. The labeling laws don't mandate that we be told what percent of protein is from plants, and how much is from animals. That information would help us a lot. But you can call the companies that make the food you are considering and talk to someone about what percentage of the protein comes from which sources.

"COOKING" FOR YOUR DOG

A diet that's growing in popularity is the raw diet. There are many books on this diet, including: Ian Billinghurst DVM, *Give Your Dog A Bone*, Ian Billinghurst DVM, *The BARF Diet*, Tom Lonsdale DVM, *Raw Meaty Bones*, Tom Lonsdale DVM, *Work Wonders: Feed Your Dog Raw Meaty Bones*; Kymythy Schultze, *Natural Nutrition for Dogs and Cats*; Carina Beth MacDonald, *Raw Dog Food: Make It Easy for You and Your Dog*, Sue Johnson, *Switching to Raw*, R.L. Wysong, *Rationale for Animal Nutrition*, and Wendy Volhard & Kerry Brown, DVM, *The Holistic Guide For A Healthy Dog*. A good book for a cooked home-made diet for your dog is: Donald R. Strombeck DVM, *Home-Prepared Dog & Cat Diets: The Healthy Alternative*. Two classic books on what is needed, such as supplements, for a healthy dog are: Juliette de Bairacli Levy, *The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat*, and Wendell O. Belfield DVM and Martin Zucker, *How to Have a Healthier Dog*. And an important classic for overall health is Richard H. Pitcairn DVM, *Natural Health for Dogs & Cats*.

Many home-made diets rely on raw meat—don't be afraid of feeding it this way. Raw foods contain enzymes, bacteria (good ones) and other 'life forces' that are essential to good health. If you doubt that vegetables are *alive*, consider this—if you plant a raw potato, it will grow and reproduce. If you plant a cooked one, it will rot in the ground. Raw foods are *alive* in some way that cooked foods are not.

Because of the lengthy explanations involved, I'm not going to attempt to outline any of the exact recipes or diet plans. My best advice is to buy the books and read them cover to cover. Besides you shouldn't be doing this because someone said to—you need to understand for yourself what you're attempting to do.

FRESH (OR "PEOPLE") FOODS YOU SHOULDN'T FEED

Large amounts of egg whites: The feeding of large amounts of egg whites will cause a deficiency of biotin, a B-vitamin due to the presence of a destructive substance called avidin. However, this is of no concern if the yolks are also being fed, since the effect of the avidin is offset by the high biotin content of egg yolk. Whole eggs are among the best sources of protein available. I feed them, with the shell.

Chocolate: Contains theobromine which is toxic to dogs and cats. Unsweetened chocolate is the most dangerous, containing 16 mg. of theobromine per gram. Milk chocolate contains about 1.5 mg. per gram. The LD50 (the level at which 50% of test subjects die) for theobromine in dogs is between 240 and 500 mg/kg of body weight, but deaths have been reported after ingestion of as little as 114 mg/kg. Bottom line: No chocolate!

Onions and garlic: Consumption of a sufficient amount (equal to more than 0.5% of body weight, which isn't much) of onions results in hemolytic anemia, fever, darkened urine, and death. The toxic element is n-propylsulfide, an alkaloid. I do not know the toxic dose for garlic.

Spinach, Swiss Chard, and Rhubarb: While these are not toxic, they are high in oxalic acid, a compound that interferes with calcium absorption, so don't feed these very often.

COMBINATION APPROACH

It is important to feed a diet that really emphasizes variety so that your dogs have whatever nutrients they need whenever they need them. They don't have to wait for you to wake up, notice a problem and switch foods. Our dogs have the capacity to keep themselves perfectly healthy if we provide them with the materials to do so.

Every dog is an individual—who are we to say that this dog should do well on chicken every day, that dog needs lamb? What if your dog really needs a little bit of the nutrition from fish? What if it's not in the food? What many people find is that if you give them a little bit of everything, but not too much of anything over time (say two or three weeks), their dogs are very good at using that as they see fit. Just make sure you pay attention to animal protein—that is critical. Without it, your dog has to struggle to stay healthy.

A combination approach tries to let you have it both ways: feeding kibble for convenience and raw meaty bones diet ingredients for your dog's benefit. For some dog owners, the basis for a "combination approach" is a good animal-protein based kibble. Every year, *The Whole Dog Journal*, evaluates kibble foods and rates them for consumers.

Once you have a base kibble, you need to supplement with fresh foods. Please don't call them 'people foods'—whoever said they were put here for just us? You have a couple of ways to do this; if you have several dogs, you can use Dr. Pitcairn's higher-protein recipes. His meat, egg and cottage cheese 'kibble boosters' are especially good, but I would add more veggies.

Or you can share your food with your dog—but make sure it's the good stuff. No junk food or table scraps – if you wouldn't eat it, or you know it's not good for you, don't feed it to your dog. The Wysong booklet gives good advice on this. Use lots of variety—raw ground beef, turkey, chicken, eggs, cottage cheese, yogurt, finely chopped veggies (my dogs digest chopped frozen vegetables best, just thaw and run through the food processor), and occasionally, fruit. Remember, dogs cannot digest cellulose, and cellulose is a part of raw veggies. In order to make it digestible, you must crush or break down the vegetables in a juicer, a meat grinder, or a food processor. In the good weather, dogs graze on grasses; in the winter, give them greens powder. There are several of these available in health food stores. If you let your dogs graze, make sure the area hasn't been chemically treated or fertilized.

Almost any vegetable is fair game—broccoli, carrots, kale, mustard greens, cauliflower, etc. To 'acidify' your dog and help keep infections at bay, start adding one—to—two ounces of apple cider vinegar (ACV) to each gallon of your dog's drinking water or add a tablespoon to their meal. Some breeders report that they have cured the beginning stages of a bladder infection by doubling the amount of apple cider vinegar for a few days. Most dogs will drink it willingly. If possible, use raw, organic ACV. Apples are one of the most heavily sprayed fruits, plus the raw ACV has a much better flavor than the grocery store variety, which is cooked. If you use grocery store apple cider vinegar, be sure that it is ACV, and not ACV-flavored white distilled vinegar.

If your dog is currently having a lot of problems, add 1 or 2 amino acid complex tablets to his daily diet until he's recovered. You can add them any time the dog starts to have problems - stress does cause dogs' needs to change, and sometimes the diet needs an amino acid boost. Increasing the ACV also helps. Make sure you use a casein-based amino acid complex, most dogs accept them without problems. I am told the soy based tablets can cause an allergic reaction. DO NOT try to guess which amino acid your dog needs - it's impossible to do and since they work in concert with each other, you could be making things worse. Use a complex so that your dog will get them all. Let his body pick and choose what he needs.

I do use some other supplements, I like whole food supplements best. Kelp, honey, and seaweed are good. Also B-complex and vitamin E. For coat, you can add chelated zinc. I do not feed these every day, I rotate so that they get each one once or twice a week. I do feed vitamin C powder every day. I feed ascorbic acid with citrus bioflavonoids or ester C. Other people use the buffered forms of C - sodium ascorbate or calcium ascorbate. Good sources for vitamins are www.b-naturals.com and <http://www.naturalrearing.com/>.

THE OVERWEIGHT DOG

Too many dogs are overweight and their owners are constantly looking for a sure-fire formula for taking that weight off. Very often they're advised to feed one of the "Lite" formulas. Some people combine this with canned pumpkin or green beans, in an effort to fill the dog up, not out. They've all been on diets themselves (hasn't everybody at one time or another?) and they're upset by the fact that while eating such a regimen, their dog is probably hungry.

Before attempting to take weight off your dog by any method, you should first have a thyroid test done. Many dogs do have sluggish thyroids, and if this is the case with your dog, no weight loss program is going to work until you correct the condition. Hypothyroid dogs have very slow metabolisms, and can gain huge amounts of weight while eating next to nothing. Ask for the tests that are done by labs, like Michigan State and Dr. Jean Dodds Hemopet (<http://www.itsfortheanimals.com/HEMOPET.HTM>). We use Dr. Dodds, and we have been very satisfied. To do that, you need to fill out her forms, take them and your dog to your vet, have the vet pull the blood and send it to the address on the forms. Dr. Dodds' fee is very reasonable, she will discuss the results with you, and any profits go to a good cause.

If your dog's thyroid levels are low, you will have to supplement with thyroid hormone. Once you get the dosage adjusted (which will involve further periodic testing), you will probably find that your dog loses weight with no dietary changes on your part (assuming you were feeding adequate, but not excessive calories before).

HOW MANY CALORIES SHOULD I FEED?

Here's a good rule of thumb that you can use as a starting point for an average dog (geriatric dogs and puppies will be the exceptions to this). Feed 290 calories for every 15 lbs. you think your dog should weigh. So if you figure an ideal weight for your dog should be 50 lbs. you will want to feed him around 1,015 calories per day. To find out how many cups of kibble that is, divide 1,015 by the number of calories in a cup of your dog's kibble food. If the caloric content of your kibble isn't listed on the bag, call the company and ask. They should have this information readily available.

If you find your dog isn't losing on this ideal amount, or is staying a bit over weight, adjust the quantity of food to less per day. Keep adjusting until you find the amount that keeps your dog at the desired weight. Of

course, puppies need more calories than this, and geriatrics will probably need less. But the above formula can be used as a starting point.

Keep in mind as you figure out quantities that every dog is an individual and that the ingredients also count: for example, too high a level of protein may give your dog lots of energy - to the point of making him hyper and hard to live with - and keep him too thin. Too little protein - particularly from animal sources - and your dog may become obese and encounter real health. The trick is to find the right levels for your dog.