

Cryslen Welsh Springer Spaniels

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Raw Feeding Public Service Message for Puppies

This is a public service message that summarizes the basics of raw feeding for new raw feeders with puppies. The information is gathered from this list and the rawfeeding list, as well as several nutritional resources on the internet which you can find by googling! I hope new members find it useful.

Puppies need meaty meaty meaty bones: Puppies need more protein than adult dogs as they grow at an incredible rate. Protein contains essential amino acids, the building blocks of your future dog. Muscle meat is a great source of protein, but it contains a lot of phosphorus and is low in calcium.

That is why puppies need bones (and other connective tissue like cartilage). These provide biologically balanced minerals, especially calcium, but also copper, iodine, iron, magnesium, zinc, and manganese. The best and safest way to provide balanced calcium and phosphorus is by feeding raw meaty bones that have between 10 and 15% edible bone in them. Puppy does not have to eat all the bone, if sufficient edible bone is offered, in general puppies will get enough calcium for normal skeletal development. Supplemental calcium should not be fed to growing pups. Puppies do not have a mechanism for controlling over-absorption of calcium, which leads to a calcium/phosphorus imbalance and abnormal skeletal growth.

Puppies need fat in their diets – high quality animal fat, which means the raw fat that comes attached to the meat. Some trimming of incredibly fatty meats is ok, but don't trim drastically.

Puppies need to eat organs. About 8% of the total diet should be a mix of organs which provide an enzyme-rich mixture of protein, B-complex vitamins, vitamins A and D, some vitamin C, and essential fatty acids EPA, DHA, and AA, along minerals such as manganese, selenium, zinc, potassium and copper. Liver has a high iron, Vitamin A and B12, and folate content, as well as niacin and pantothenic acid. Like muscle meat, organs contain a lot of phosphorus (and potassium) and are low in calcium. Heart counts as a muscle meat more than it does as an organ. So do chicken gizzards.

Green tripe is a great food for puppies. It is the stomach from grass eating animals which contains beneficial bacteria, essential fatty acids and other nutrients, and it has a very good calcium/phosphorus ratio.

Puppies need approximately double the amount of vitamin E as adult dogs. It is found in organs, (liver, heart, kidneys, brains) and in red meats in moderate amounts, and in eggs and fish in plentiful amounts. The essential fatty acid DHA (Omega 3) is also plentiful in fish and in organs like brains, kidneys, and liver.

In summary, if you feed a variety of raw meaty (and I mean meaty) bones, with an overall average of 10 to 15% edible bone, and you feed some organs that add up to about 8% of the diet, you've got all the bases covered.

If bone percentage strays much higher than these values, you may be feeding too much bone at the expense of much needed protein and throwing off the calcium/phosphorus ratio – which can interfere with proper bone formation. If you fed primarily chicken necks, wings, and frames, for example, your bone percentage would be in the neighborhood of 50-60% or higher. That's not good.

If organs are not fed, the diet may be lacking in vitamins and fatty acids, iron, and other necessary stuff. You could make up some of this in eggs and other food items, but organs are ideal. Dogs that don't like liver can usually be converted by partially freezing it, or offering it lightly seared the first few times.

Organs are rich, and generally should be fed in small portions along with the regular meal. Feeding a "liver only" or "organs only" meal is pretty much a guaranteed way of giving your dog the runs. Organs need not be fed every day – you just want to get an average of 8% over the long run.

Do not be tempted to feed more than 8% of organs, especially if you are using mainly liver. This is too much of a good thing, and your pup will be overloaded with non water soluble vitamins which he or she cannot eliminate. Too much vitamin A will interfere with vitamin D activity which is essential for calcium absorption, and cause brittle bones prone to fracture.

If you feel like you need to supplement for Omega 3 (grain fed meat animals are low in Omega 3 compared to grass fed animals) do so with fish oil. While some form of Omega-3 can be found in flaxseed, walnuts and a few other foods, the most beneficial form of Omega-3 - containing 2 fatty acids, EPA and DHA - can be found only in fish.

Do not supplement with Cod Liver Oil. Cod Liver Oil is like liver... it contains vitamins A and D and using it as a supplement in addition to raw feeding could be overdoing it on both counts.

Do not supplement with other vitamins. The best source of nutrients is from whole foods, and a balanced and varied diet. Supplements are only needed if a dog cannot receive all of the nutrients it needs because it either can't or doesn't eat enough, or can't or doesn't eat a variety of species appropriate foods. Supplementing vitamins and minerals is never a good substitute for healthy feeding. First of all, vitamins, minerals, and nutrients that imbalanced will interfere with the correct functioning or absorption of other vitamins and nutrients. Secondly, randomly supplementing because something sounds like a good idea can lead to providing excessive levels or one or more nutrients if you do not know what puppy is already getting in their food. Calcium is one of the most commonly over supplemented items.