

Diet and nutrition for pets

With so many different diets and formulations available these days, it can be really difficult to know which one will best suit a pet. **Imogen Read** of Drove Veterinary Hospital provides some advice



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No one diet is right for every pet so two or three may need to be tried over a few weeks.

Marketing, packaging and promotions can play a huge role in which food we choose, so it is important for a customer to be encouraged to read the small print on the pack, especially the list of ingredients contained within.

They should also consider the daily amount their pet will need to eat in order to fulfil their nutritional requirements. As a general rule, the better quality diets will be more expensive per bag; however, a pet may require a smaller portion, hence the daily feeding cost may be lower than originally thought.

Feeding a poor quality diet may result in stunted growth, obesity, tartar-encrusted teeth, upset stomach, dry coat, itchy skin, bladder stones and even behaviour problems such as hyperactivity.

Also, remember there is little point in feeding a premium diet if you then give



poor quality treats.

The rules may need to be bent occasionally, but it always pays if a customer takes some advice first.

Any reputable diet should come in a range of formulations. This is especially true of dog foods, because dog breeds vary so much. For example, a Great Dane has different nutritional requirements to that of a Jack Russell.

Large breed puppies (reaching an adult weight over 25kg) are a particularly important group.

It is widely known that feeding an imbalanced diet to a growing large-breed dog

can have devastating consequences on their development, especially that of the joints.

This is partly due to mineral imbalances between calcium and phosphorus.

You may also think that adding fresh meat to a complete dry food will improve the 'quality'.

However, adding a huge protein source to an already balanced diet actually makes it completely imbalanced.

BOREDOM FALLACY

It is common to think a pet may get bored when receiving the same food all the time. This is not the case.

With puppies or fussy eaters it may be tempting to add in some meat or gravy. This can actually make the problem worse because they may grow to expect it, and gravy and stock can contain onion salt so care needs to be taken. Adding to a diet should be avoided unless specifically advised by a vet.

Customers should be encouraged to talk to SQPs and vets if they have any questions about what to feed their pet, or are worried their pet may have a diet-related problem. Both can play a big part in helping to find a solution.

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TOP TIPS FOR SQPS

- 1 No diet is right for every pet
- 2 Know the small print on the pack and encourage customers to read it
- 3 Go through the details with them
- 4 Quality costs but may be cheaper in the long run
- 5 Feeding a poor quality diet leads to health problems
- 6 Keep an eye on the treats given to the pet!
- 7 Adding to a diet should be avoided unless recommended by a vet

