

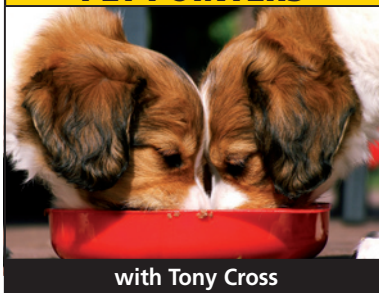
Health begins in the food bowl

Everyone knows that a balanced diet keeps you fit and healthy. This applies not only to us humans, but also to our pets. The experts from the specialist pet retailer Maxi Zoo explain which foods are the healthiest for dogs and cats.

Cats are little hunters who would normally feed on up to 15 mice a day in their natural habitat. Other animals too, such as birds, fish or beetles would go for their own set menu. These meals give the cat everything it needs: high grade protein, fat, carbohydrate, crude fibre, mineral nutrients and vitamins, bones and hair. Of vital importance for cats are the amino acid taurine and the fatty arachidonic acid which are only found in animal protein and fat. Should you be considering putting your cat on a meat-free diet, we would absolutely advise against it as this would have serious consequences for its health. To give them nothing but meat or fish would also lead to deficiency. Human food too, such as meal remains and milk have no place in the food bowl: The protein content is too low and the vitamin supply unbalanced. Ready-made dry or moist foods are based on the natural nutritional needs of your animal and can be given as a complete food. You can then dispense with extra vitamins or minerals unless your cat is sick, very old or pregnant.

Dogs need a great deal less protein than cats. In their natural habitat, they would only hunt and kill an animal sporadically, as a pack. The contents of their prey's intestines as well

PET POINTERS



with Tony Cross

as plants, berries or fruit will be sought after when needs must. Because dogs are carnivores, one shouldn't keep them on a vegetarian diet for long periods. Basically, dogs need a balanced proportion of some 25 different nutrients and vital substances, in particular highly digestible protein for growth, musculature and metabolism as well as carbohydrates and fats for energy. To enable the dog's body to fully exploit these substances,

they must form a part of a dog's daily diet in the correct quantity and composition. Those who want to prepare their animal's meals themselves must therefore really know their pet. Alternatively, high quality ready-prepared foods are on offer containing all the necessary building blocks including vitamin and mineral nutrients. Chocolate, sweets and human food remains are taboo.

The following applies to dogs as well as cats: because age related dietary requirements are different for each animal, you should resort to food which is specially adjusted to the age of your pet. Also, illnesses, allergies and other conditions demand that you sometimes have to follow a specific dietary plan – your vet can advise you on this.

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A BRIEF NUTRITIONAL PRIMER

The digestive organs of dogs and cats are designed for devouring prey which always has more or less the same quality and nutritional composition. Therefore it's actually enough to opt for one high quality food variety. Each time you switch to another food strains the digestive system. This should be done slowly, if at all, by mixing the old food bit by bit with the new. The following only applies to cats. A cat's food impressions are already formed in the first weeks. What they haven't already got to know during that period will mostly be shunned later. So offer your whelping kitten different types of food so that, when they become sick or old, for instance, changing it doesn't create problems.



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