

# RAW FEEDING GUIDE

for healthy, happy dogs



with Kymythy R Schultze CN, AHI



## Dogs Naturally

for dogs without boundaries



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You're probably familiar with the saying "Life is a Journey." And if you've recently decided to feed your dog a raw diet but aren't sure how to proceed, then you've hit a well worn fork in that road. Even if you've passed the speed bump and have experienced feeding a raw diet, it's always a good idea to get an occasional tune-up. You know, look under the hood, check the fluid levels and make sure you're good to go for the long haul. You want your dog friend to be happy and healthy for a lifetime.

### Transitioning to a Raw Diet

It's easy to see why a person could have a rough time figuring out exactly how to transition their dog to a raw diet. There's a world of information available on the subject and yet much of it is conflicting. Insecurity comes easily when one's caught in the crossfire of strongly held opinions and dictums. But please know, newcomer, that your very willingness to put time and energy into providing a better life for your dog through good nutrition is an effort that all raw feeders can agree to applaud you for.

So, here you are at that famous fork in the road and you're ready to switch your furry friend's diet to that of nutrient rich, raw food. Good for you!

Let's get your motor running and head out on the highway with these five tips on how to transition your dog to a raw food diet (remember, they were born to eat wild!).

### Diet Decisions

How do you decide which diet advice to follow? Are you feeling overwhelmed with the research you've done? How can you be sure you're doing it right when all the "experts" say they have the answer and yet there seem to be 200 different answers? It's actually not very difficult if you ask the real expert: your dog. As long as you keep your dog's digestive system in mind, you'll never go wrong. Your dog's entire body is perfectly designed to eat specific foods. Feed your dog according to its physiology.

### Get Your Ducks in a Row

Or chicken, or lamb, or beef. That is, be prepared. Don't just start giving handfuls of hamburger to your dog and leave it at that. Get a game plan. Find a source for the ingredients you'll be using.

Don't worry, it's not difficult. There's a grocery store near you and that'll do just fine. As you branch out, you may find good deals

on meat, bone, and such at more exotic places such as the old fashioned butcher shop, or meat markets, farmers' markets, co-ops, and even online groups that deal exclusively with raw food for dog lovers. Unless you have a small number of small dogs, you may want to purchase a freezer to store all those great deals on meat that you're going to bring home.

## Drum Roll, Please

Okay, time to start giving your dog some of this great stuff you've bought. If you're nervous about transitioning your dog to a raw diet, take a moment to think it through. You've done your homework, you have the food, and the dog is probably creating puddles of drool as he's watched you bring home the raw goodies.

Give yourself a moment of empowerment. Nobody knows your dog and his habits better than you. So, if you're asking yourself whether you should transition to the new diet slowly or all at once, you are the best person to answer that question based on what you know about your dog. Unless you feel otherwise, simply preparing a good raw meal and putting the dish down usually works well. Keep in mind that a cooked kibble or canned food product is digested more slowly than raw meat. So, if you combine the two, you force the raw meat to stay in your dog's body longer than it should. This could set up a situation where negative bacteria proliferate, in addition to other digestive impairment.

You may want to start with a slightly smaller meal of the new diet, to avoid overwhelming the dog's system with something new. You can personalize the diet by feeding types and forms of raw food that you feel your dog will do best on. You can also customize the diet for a dog that currently has health issues.

## Change is Good

You've probably heard that changing your dog's food, even kibble to kibble, may cause loose stools and such. You may have also heard about "detox." Both conditions are possible when switching your dog to a raw diet. First, any change in food may disrupt your dog's digestive system and second, a good raw diet may give your dog's body the renewed strength to do some body repair and healing (otherwise known as "detox" or "detoxification").

**If you can't feed your dog a raw diet with love and confidence, perhaps you're not ready for the switch. It's not really fair to your dog to put down his bowl of raw food while your finger is poised over 911 on the telephone. That's not good for anyone's digestion.**



In this area, as in everything, there's no "one size fits all" guideline. Each dog will handle the switch and detox differently. The amount of inner house cleaning a dog does depends a lot on his current state of health and history. Look to your dog; he should be happy and headed in a good direction.

## Breathe!

If you cannot feed your dog a raw diet with love and confidence, perhaps you're not ready for the switch. It's not really fair to your dog to put down his bowl of raw food while your finger is poised over 911 on the telephone. That's not good for anyone's digestion. Meal time should be a time of love and happiness. You've done your homework and you've put together a fantastic meal for your dog. Let your love and care for your canine companion fill the kitchen.

## Raw Feeding Guidelines

Raw feeding isn't as complicated as the vets and pet food manufacturers would have you believe. Here are the basic and simple rules you need to follow if you want to feed a raw diet.

### Balance the Calcium and Phosphorus

Calcium and phosphorus aren't fancy words to be feared. Meats are high in phosphorus and bones are high in calcium. In order to balance out these essential minerals, then about two thirds of your dog's diet should be meat and organs and about one third should be meaty bones such as lamb necks, chicken backs, beef ribs, pork tails and turkey necks. You can also feed whole fish, raw eggs with the shell on and green tripe, and these super foods all have the correct ratio of calcium to phosphorus.

Don't be fooled into thinking a meat and bone based diet is lacking in vitamins and minerals either. Your dog doesn't need the carbohydrates and grains that kibbles contain; they're just there to hold the kibbles together and provide a cheaper source of protein. Meats contain all of the essential amino acids (the basic structural building blocks of proteins) your dog needs, and they do so in a ratio that's ideal for their complete use.

Meats also contain 12 of the 13 essential vitamins in large quantities. Meat is a very concentrated source of vitamins A, E, and the entire B complex. Vitamins D and B12 are found only in animal products (although adequate amounts of vitamin D can be attained with sufficient sunlight). The thirteenth vitamin, vitamin C, is found only in very small quantities in meat. However, unlike us, dogs can manufacture their own vitamin C because Mother Nature kindly provided them with the right tools to eat a meat based diet.

### Organ Meat Should Be About 15 Percent Of The Diet

It's important to feed your dog all the parts of an animal, not just meat and bones. The organs, also known as offal, are the most nutrient dense parts of the animal. Compared to regular cuts of muscle meat, organ meats are more densely packed with just about every nutrient including heavy doses of B vitamins such as B1, B2, B6, folic acid and vitamin B12.

Organ meats are also loaded with minerals like phosphorus, iron, copper, magnesium and iodine, and provide the important fat soluble vitamins A, D, E and K. It's important to note that animals raised outside on grass contain even higher levels of these essential nutrients than their grain fed counterparts.

Liver is known to be one of the most concentrated sources of naturally occurring vitamin A of any food. Vitamin A aids digestion, keeps the reproductive organs healthy, and is a powerful antioxidant. Liver also contains one of the best, most usable sources of iron. Iron is necessary for many functions in the body, including the formation of hemoglobin, brain development and function,

regulation of body temperature, muscle activity and catecholamine metabolism, to name just a few. A lack of iron will have a direct effect on the immune system; it diminishes the number of T-cells and the production of antibodies.

### How Often Should You Feed?

**Most people feed their dogs twice per day. Many raw feeders feed once a day and twice a day and some days not at all. Dogs are built for periods of gorging and fasting. Fasting dogs once a week can create a healthier dog because the majority of immune function is in the gut. If the dog's digestive system is continually digesting meals, there is no time for house cleaning and the dog's immune system will suffer. Once every week or two, try fasting your dog; give him a nice beef neck bone to chew on and nothing else. The exception is puppies under six months of age who should eat three times per day.**

Feed liver once a week (or several small servings per week) and try to find an organic source whenever possible because the liver is responsible for filtering toxins out of the body. Other organs to consider include kidneys, lung, pancreas and ickier choices like eyeballs and brains. Tongue and heart are considered muscle meat, not organ meat, so throw them into your daily rotation.

### Byproducts Rule!

Feel free to feed other weird and wonderful things such as chicken feet, tracheas, tails, testicles and pizzles (if you have to ask what those are, you don't want to know). Beef trachea, pig ears, chicken and turkey feet are loaded in natural chondroitin and glucosamine, which help to build healthy joints.

### Never Feed Cooked Bones

Raw bones are soft enough to bend and digest easily but cooking bones makes them sharp and dangerous. For optimal safety, meal times should also be supervised.

### Balance Over Time

There's no need to be a slave to raw feeding. You don't have to mix all of the above in the exact proportions and mince them into little complete and balanced patties so your dog has every nutrient, every day. In essence, what you want to do is a little technique called frankenprey. Over the course of a week or a few days, you want to assemble a complete animal, to make sure your dog gets the right proportions. Think of what a chicken or goat is made of, inside and out, and try to assemble that into your dog's meals over several

days, keeping the approximately same proportions of meat to bone and meat to organ meat. Now that is real balanced and complete nutrition for our carnivorous friends!

### Throw Away The Scoop

Are you nervous because there are no label instructions showing you how many cups to feed your dog? Start by feeding him about 2% of his body weight (if he's a puppy, feed 2.5% of his expected adult weight). Now you're going to put your common sense and good observation skills to work. If he starts looking plump, feed less. If he starts looking thin, feed more. It's not really scientific but it works.

### Know Where Your Meat Comes From

Here is one last important note and this is what makes raw feeding really attractive for many people: we know where our dog food comes from.

Whenever possible, try to get your dog's meat from local producers instead of the grocery store. Try farmers' markets, local butcher shops, farmers and co-ops. The closer you get to the meat producers, the more you'll know about how those animals were treated. This applies to both the treatment of the meat as well as the ethics and sustainability behind the treatment of the animals themselves.

**No one wants to think they're doing the wrong thing for their beloved canine friend. But taking a good look at your dog's health and being honest with yourself can only be helpful. Don't make excuses.**

If you can afford it, try to find organic, grass fed and pasture raised animals. Their meat will contain fewer toxins and will be more nutritious. If you can't afford organic, try to find grass fed animals. If you can't afford that, then you will still be better off than feeding most commercial kibbles so just find the best quality meat source you can afford and watch for sales on the grass fed and organic meats.

That's really all there is to raw feeding. If you want to know more, there are lots of good holistic vets and books to help you fine tune your dog's meals.

### Pondering Produce

"Eat your vegetables!" From our mothers to modern day health practitioners, we've been bombarded for years with the plea to consume more produce. We're told to partake in the rainbow of colors that make up the bountiful array of fruits and veggies. And even if Mother didn't have the science behind her, she now joins the ranks of many nutritionists who recommend incorporating more produce into our diets.

Today we know, through much studied research, that fruits and vegetables contain a staggering amount of nutrients including vitamins and minerals, antioxidants, new fangled words like phytonutrients, and other compounds that are good for our bodies.



So, if fruits and veggies are so loaded with good “stuff” they must be good for our canine friends too, right? One would think that if produce contains all those great nutrients for us, it would benefit our dogs to consume them also. Alas, the answer is a bit more complicated and yet comes from great simplicity in physiology.

Find an herbivore. Any old horse, cow, sheep, or goat will do. What, not all of you have one of these hanging out at your house waiting for you look in its mouth? If not, use your mind’s eye to visualize how these animal’s teeth differ from your dog’s teeth. True herbivores have flat teeth, except for a few up front that are used to tear off vegetation for the other teeth to chew and chew and chew. They are built for lots of chewing because plants contain a rigid cell wall called cellulose. Cellulose is a linear polysaccharide polymer with many glucose monosaccharide units. Try that sentence out on your friends at your next dinner party! If there’s a smart one in the crowd they’ll know that you’re really just talking about fiber (but it doesn’t sound nearly as impressive).

If you check your dog’s mouth you’ll find very different teeth. Your dog has the teeth of a carnivore. They are sharp and ridged, not flat. Your dog’s teeth are obviously made for holding, ripping, and tearing flesh. Plus, unlike the herbivore, your dog’s jaw is designed to move up and down, not sideways. Dogs don’t chew cud, which is a method of breaking down the tough cellulose wall by mixing it with saliva and doing more chewing, chewing, chewing. Dogs’ salivary glands are used to lubricate food so it can be wolfed down in chunks. We humans are somewhere in the middle with sharp and chewing teeth. Unlike dogs, our saliva contains the enzyme amylase which breaks down starch (contained in some vegetables and fruits).

If we move down into the dog’s stomach, we find that it’s small compared to an herbivore’s stomach. The stomach is the place where food is dissolved and liquefied. Only food that is dissolved can be digested. Cellulose from plants is difficult for dogs to digest and can alter the normal pH of the stomach. Most, if not all of it, passes through without being dissolved. By the way, even the folks that do the research to make the guidelines for pet foods have stated that dogs have no nu-

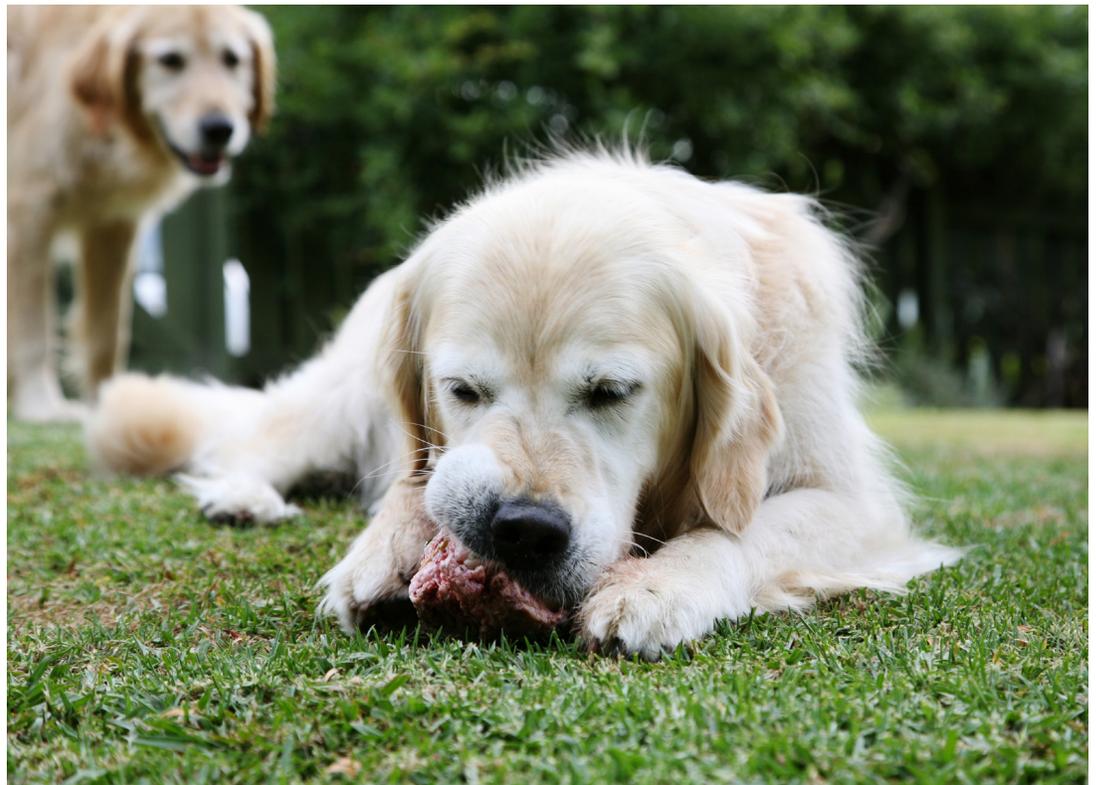
tritional need for fiber. The more fiber/cellulose you feed, the bigger the stool as the matter goes through your dog’s body without being properly dissolved and digested.

**Sometimes we humans are trying to make up for any guilt we feel about not eating many ourselves. But, you don’t get brownie points if you’re not eating them! For dogs, too many fruits and vegetables can alter pH level; add fructose sugar, too much fiber, and other issues. It’s quite common for the issues to clear up when the vegetation has been reduced.**

The dog’s small intestine is very important in the digestive process as it’s the place where the dissolved food is digested. It also has ducts from the pancreas and liver which supply enzymes to break down fats and proteins into fatty acids and amino acids.

And let’s not forget the colon. Our dog’s colon harbors healthy organisms such as good bacteria and synthesized nutrients. An herbivore’s colon is designed to ferment cellulose, thus helping to break it down even further. Our dog’s body is not designed the same way.

So, by taking this in depth journey into our dog’s digestive process we find that they are well equipped to consume and digest their natural diet of, to be quite blunt, other animals. That is, a diet pre-



dominately consisting of meat, fat, bones and those lovely extras that come with life in the wild. Yes, even though they have been our domesticated friends for a while, their digestive system is still that of their wild ancestor, the wolf.

There are been a few misleading ideas about wolves and plants. For example, you may have heard that wolves eat the stomach contents of their prey first and that's why dogs should eat vegetables and fruit. But leading wolf experts have actually found that when wolves bring down a large herbivore, they shake the stomach contents out of the stomach lining before consumption. And if they were to consume an entire small prey animal, only a small amount of vegetation would be consumed. Wild canids do nibble on wild berries in season and regularly get small amounts of nutritious pond scum when drinking. We do know that if whole fruits, berries, or other vegetation are consumed, they show up much the way they went in, when looking at wild scat (poop). You may have noticed this with your own domesticated carnivore. Give a dog a whole carrot or berry and you'll most likely see it looking pretty much the same when you're on poop patrol.

Keeping in mind the natural diet and the physiology of your carnivore will help you choose foods for them that they will digest and utilize the best, and in the proper amounts. So, let Bugs binge on the carrots and feed dogs a species appropriate diet for their good health and wellbeing.

## Tips for Tweaking the Raw Diet

People new to the raw diet may wonder what in the world "tweaking" is and how it relates to feeding their dog. Tweaking is simply a popular term for making adjustments to your dog's diet. One of the wonderful benefits of preparing a homemade raw diet is the ability to create meals specifically for each individual animal. Wise care givers know to keep an eye and hand on their dog; and if they think diet adjustments need to be made, they'll tweak the ingredients. They may add, subtract, or otherwise change what goes into the dog's bowl.

So, grab yourself some steak tartare and ceviche from the hors d'oeuvres table and let's talk tweaking.

## Know When to Say When

Well, it wouldn't be a party if we didn't mention this one! It applies to diet tweaking as well. Very knowledgeable, well meaning, experienced raw feeders can easily get carried away with adding too many supplements to their dog's diet. It seems like each day brings the discovery of a new nutraceutical, super nutrient, or other supplement. And while there is absolutely a time and place to use these for specific conditions, it's also easy to forget that food – real food – is the original source of all these wonder nutrients. If you find yourself opening a plethora of bottles and hear your bank account crying each time you feed your dog, perhaps it's time to

take a moment to review what you're putting in the bowl. It's really amazing how often the KISS (keep it simple, sweetie) method actually works. If you're still eager to spend more money on your dog's meals, put it towards buying the best quality food you can find such as grass fed and finished meat and such.

## Special Needs

Don't get stuck in the rut of doing what you've always done if it's not working. Sometimes you can feed a raw diet the same way for many years to many dogs, and then one day a dog comes along who has different needs. Pay attention to the individual dog as he may need something slightly different than what works for your other dogs. Even if it takes you away from your comfort zone, be open to new ideas and methods. Dogs are fabulous teachers and perhaps the challenging dog will lead you down a path of new discovery and knowledge.

## See the Truth

No one wants to think they're doing the wrong thing for their beloved canine friend. But taking a good look at your dog's health and being honest with yourself can only be helpful. Don't make excuses. Pretend your dog belongs to someone else and they've asked your opinion on how the dog looks to you. Do you notice a bit of a nasty ear odor? Is there a little hot spot starting up? There's no shame in changing what you're doing if it may benefit your dog. In fact, it's quite admirable of you.

## Dogs Don't Lie

Always remember the species you are feeding. The more effort you put into the study of your canine's physiology, the better you'll know how to feed it to the best of your ability. Yes, dogs are opportunistic, but they are definitely carnivores. Don't confuse what you should be eating with what your dog should be eating. You don't get a gold star in your column if you give the dog your salad. And don't think because your dog likes to eat something that it's actually good for him! Allowing him to eat all the fallen plums because he likes them may lead to some real health issues. Save the majority of the plant world for your consumption and feed your domesticated predator as close to what he'd get at the end of a successful hunt as possible.

## Get Real

You don't know it all. I don't know it all. "They" don't know it all. Nobody knows it all. But, it's okay. Welcome to the amazing Universe! The worst thing you can do for your dog's health is to become complacent about your knowledge. The smartest people in the world never stop learning. It's the experience that we gain on our quest for knowledge that provides us with valuable information. It doesn't matter if you've been feeding your dog a raw diet for

two years or twenty, you are doing yourself and your dog a disservice if you close your mind to change. Even if your dogs are the epitome of health, never miss an opportunity to welcome information – whether you think it’s useful or not. Information comes in many forms, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly. But you’ll miss it unless you keep an open mind.

## Bonus Tip:

### Don't Be a Jerk

Many people who feed a raw diet may have had to fight for their right to do so. Perhaps you’ve been up against major opposition and have become stronger in voice. Maybe in your quest to do best by your dog, you’ve had to change some of your own beliefs and now you’re quite vested in those ways. Or you’re so pleased with your knowledge that you want to change the world! You are to be commended for sticking up for your dog and for wanting to help others. But, please do so in a manner in which you would want to be treated yourself. There are individuals and groups of raw feeders who are quite militant about how to feed dogs, using fear and condemnation as motivational tools. This is not what’s needed now - or ever. Healthy discussion and respect work much better towards education. So, avoid the party poopers and join the fun with your healthy dog. By the way, it’s BYOB (bring your own bones)! 🐾

*Kymythy R. Schultze has been a trailblazer in the field of animal nutrition for over two decades. She is one of the world’s leading experts on nutrition and holistic care for dogs and is a nutritional consultant for veterinarians, pet companies, and dog lovers alike. When not busy giving seminars, consultations, writing, or researching, she enjoys preparing delicious meals for good friends, furry and non-furry. Find Kymythy’s books and more information by visiting her website at [www.kymythy.com](http://www.kymythy.com)*



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