



# The WoofGang Wag Rag



Vol. 9 No. 12

DECEMBER 2009

Free

## Canine Diet – Food for Thought

Deciding the best diet for our dogs has only gotten more confusing as the types and varieties have proliferated. Commercial or homemade? Cooked or raw? Free feeding or discrete meals? Well, every dog is different, but chew on some of these ideas...

### Deciphering Commercial Labeling

The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) is a governing agency that promotes uniformity in feed regulations and labeling and substantiates whether a food is nutritionally adequate. A food deemed “complete and balanced” must prove adequacy in sustaining puppies (“growth”), adult dogs (“maintenance”), gestating or lactating females, or “all life stages” (all of the above).

Substantiation can be achieved in one of three ways: through a series of feeding trials that last a specified amount of time, by meeting the AAFCO nutritional profiles for nutrient requirements and, finally, by approximating the nutritional profile of an already approved “family member”. Each standard has its strengths and weaknesses, so your best bet is to read the ingredient list of each food to determine the quality of the ingredients it contains.

### The Ingredient List on a Commercial Label

While there is a huge selection of foods out there, there are a few basic tenets which will help reduce the field substantially:

- 🐾 Look for foods that have a meat source (e.g. “beef”) *first* in the ingredient list.
- 🐾 In dry food, a whole meat (e.g. “chicken”) contains a lot of water, which means that it’s ideal if the second or third ingredient in the list is a specific meat *meal* (e.g. “chicken meal”). If the only other animal protein is much later in the list, it does *not* actually contain much animal protein.
- 🐾 Canned foods need liquid for processing. It is better if this be the second item (not first) in the ingredient list, and it’s usually tastier to pets if broth is used rather than water.
- 🐾 Animal proteins tend to be tastier *and* easier to digest than plant proteins.
- 🐾 Avoid foods that contain by-products (either specific or general) early in the ingredient list.

(continued on page 2)

## About the Trainer

Dog trainer **Laura Garber**, CPDT, is a professional member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) and is certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT), the first national certification for dog trainers.

Laura has authored articles about dogs and dog behavior in dog-centric magazines and on-line resources.

Laura believes strongly in strengthening the bond between human and companion animal. For this reason, she regards training as an exercise in building relationship rather than obedience. Such an approach promises greater understanding and symbiosis within our family packs.

Log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



## \$25 Intro Training Offer

Get a 30-minute introductory basic training session for \$25 or apply it towards a 4-session package and get the 30-minute session FREE! (Offer details based on location.) Call **WoofGang** at 646.345.5116 to make an appointment.

## Healthful Hounds

With the holidays upon us, we’re all bound to pack on a few extra pounds, even our beloved canine family members. So, as you determine your own New Year’s resolutions, make sure that you consider making some healthy resolutions for him as well.

Call **WoofGang** at 646.345.5116 for games and fitness you can do with your dog.

## Growing the Bonds

Our pets have become members of the family, working, playing, eating, and sleeping at our sides.

**WoofGang** can help you strengthen the bond with your canine family member. Call 646.4345.5116 today!

## Territorial Behavior

Allowing your dog to peer out the window at passers-by can develop into a more dangerous behavior called territorial aggression. Your dog will start to think that it’s his barking that’s keeping the passing people and dogs away and, over time, this can potentially put your guests at risk.

Call **WoofGang** at 646.345.5116 for help with this dangerous behavior.

## Canine Diet (cont.)

🐾 Look for foods with whole grains and vegetables; avoid fractions (“brown rice” is better than “wheat gluten”).

🐾 Avoid corn at all costs! Corn is a simple sugar, which no dog needs. And some dogs fairly vibrate when there’s corn in their diet.

🐾 Some animals have adverse reactions to grains. If your pup’s stool tends to be loose or he has itchy skin, try a grain-free diet.

🐾 Avoid foods with artificial colors.

### “Ancestral” Foods: Are All Proteins Created Equal?

From the very beginning, dogs evolved by picking through the human waste heap. As dog breeds became specialized to assist humans with their disparate jobs, the canine meal derived from human leftovers diverged just as greatly. While herding dogs were bred to work sheep, goats, and cattle, coastal breeds assisted fishermen, and hunting dogs helped with hunting various game. It stands to reason, then, that the working canine would feast on whatever was most available to his keeper. So, when deciding upon the optimal protein source for your dog, consider the job for which he was bred. Sight hounds will thrive on rabbit and venison, northern breeds on fish and sweet potato, herding dogs on beef and lamb, retrievers on duck, and Asian breeds on chicken and fish.

### The Finicky Eater

Little dogs are notoriously finicky eaters. Further, some dogs are just not big eaters and some breeds are lighter eaters than others. So a missed meal here or there should not be a great cause for alarm if your dog is acting healthy otherwise. But, if he was once a good eater and his behavior has suddenly changed, consult your vet.

If your dog’s a chronically picky eater, typically it’s due to free-feeding. When there is always food available, the dog is never worried where his next meal is coming from, so he might adopt a “wait and see” attitude with the hopes that some better treats will be offered throughout the day. Soft-hearted owners that we are, we will worry that he’s not eating enough and offer him enticing tidbits, just what he was hoping for. By feeding your dog discrete meals, putting the bowl down and then picking it up 15 minutes later, eaten or not, he may learn to eat it when it’s available.

Improving the quality of your dog’s diet and including variety may spur a renewed interest in eating. Make sure that you are not overfeeding, as this might be a reason for skipped meals. Further, a sluggish diet may be the result of boredom. Increase your dog’s exercise and play time, and include mental stimulation. More than a few dogs I know have shown greater interest in their food when it was put in a puzzle toy like the Kong or the Tricky Treat ball. As a last resort, try pouring warm water or broth over your dog’s food to see if that entices him.

### A Healthful Diet

Whatever your choice, whether you opt for the ease of a dry food or the ultimate in health with a raw diet, it’s important to supplement the diet. Add yogurt or cottage cheese occasionally. Cook up some sweet potato or pumpkin or steam vegetables like broccoli and carrots and add it into the dish. And include an essential fatty acid (omega 3s from an animal source like salmon) supplement as well as a whole food vitamin supplement daily for optimum health.

For this article in its entirety, log on to [www.myWoofGang.com](http://www.myWoofGang.com).



## Ask Woofie...

*Woofie, our pup London is about 7 months old. She’s just constantly mouthing, even when you walk away, yelp or do an uh-uh? London is still too mouthy and doesn’t get that she hurts!*

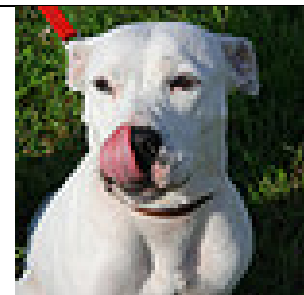
*Thanks! Jen*

*Hiya, Jen! Unfortunately, the yelp isn’t going to work anymore with her at this age. Here are several things you can try:*

- *Time-outs are one alternative.*
- *Try including more exercise in her daily routine.*
- *Practice down-stays with distraction (i.e. with someone else walking by, then with the handler walking by, etc). This will teach her an alternative behavior to being mouthy with people’s movement.*
- *You can also try to engage her in play with a long, slinky furry squeaky toy so that she’s exercising her mouth on that rather than you.*
- *Use puzzle toys like the Kong for all of her meals and snacks. This is teaching her a chew preference for her own toys rather than you.*

*Hope it helps! Happy training!*

**Woofie**



*Snowflake has a smile and a wag for everyone she meets. This little snowflake just melts for love and pets. Snowflake is waiting at the Liberty Humane Society for her forever home – her only holiday wish!*