

SHINE

Dog Nutrition

A good diet should not only meet your dog's nutritional needs but enhance health and wellness throughout every stage of their life. The right food will address their individual needs and preferences, be highly palatable and enjoyable to eat, respect any dietary sensitivities and keep them in good physical health throughout their life. Food can be safe and nutritionally complete and still not be the best diet for your dog – just like humans, not all dogs will optimally thrive on the same diet. In addition to a high-quality diet, your dog also requires regular access to fresh water.





Home-prepared pet food

It's important to understand that a diet suitable for us humans is rarely going to meet the nutritional requirements of our dogs. Dogs require 37 essential nutrients across six main nutrient groups: water, proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. So, you can imagine how difficult it is to make a complete and balanced pet food at home.

The challenge of making complete and balanced pet food at home

Researchers at the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine studied 200 homemade dog food recipes from websites, pet care books, and even veterinary textbooks. According to the study, a massive 95% of these recipes were deficient in at least one essential nutrient, with 84% lacking two or more¹. As nutrient deficiencies can lead to impaired health and disease, which in turn impact emotional health and wellbeing, these findings are extremely concerning.

It's also important to remember that many 'human foods' like grapes, onions, garlic and chocolate are toxic to dogs and can even be deadly. Home-prepared raw food diets may also have an additional risk of contamination with parasites and bacteria, making them a potential health and safety hazard to both people and pets.

¹Stockman, J, Fascetti, AJ, Kass, PH, & Larsen, JA, 2013, Evaluation of recipes of home-prepared maintenance diets for dogs, J Am Vet Med Assoc., Vol 245(2), p: 177

So, what should you be feeding?

One way to meet all your dog's essential nutrient requirements is by feeding a complete and balanced manufactured diet. In most cases, these diets are based on decades of scientific research and expertise, and are carefully designed to provide balanced nutrition according to your dog's life stage, health status or lifestyle. And while it may not always look or smell appetising to us, the texture and taste of quality, complete commercial dog food is also specifically formulated to maximise a dog's enjoyment of eating. Strict guidelines and legislation ensure that manufactured pet foods are created in line with the latest scientific standards and quality ingredients.

Click [here](#) for more information about specific requirements of dog diets and the latest scientific thinking.





Companies that prioritise scientific innovation are also constantly researching ways in which nutrition can enhance or support health. There is currently a great deal of interest in the [canine microbiome](#) and how tailored nutrition may better support a healthy population of gut bacteria. Early research suggests that the microbiome has a significant impact on physical health including digestion, allergies and gastrointestinal disorders², and may even play a role in mental health and behavioural problems such as depression³ and aggression⁴.



²Wernimont, SM, Radosevich, J, Jackson, MI, et al., 2020, The Effects of Nutrition on the Microbiome of Cats and Dogs: Impact on Health and Disease, *Front. Microbiol.* doi.org/10.3389/fmicb.2020.01266

³Mondo, E, De Cesare, A, Manfreda, G, et al., 2020, Depression and Microbiome – Study on the Relation and Contiguity between Dogs and Humans, *Appl. Sci.*, Vol 10 (2), p: 573

⁴Kirchoff, NS, Udell, MAR, Sharpton, TJ, 2019, The gut microbiome correlates with conspecific aggression in a small population of rescued dogs (*Canis familiaris*), *Peer, J.* 10.7717/peerj.6103

When choosing the right food for your dog, consider:

- Is the food nutritionally complete?
- Is it formulated for your dog's life stage?
- Does it support any health conditions your dog might have?
- Are your dog's stools of a good quality on the diet?
Keeping in mind that stool quality may be affected for a few days after transitioning to a new diet
- Is it suitable for your dog's lifestyle?
- Does your dog seem to enjoy eating it?
- Is the texture and kibble size suitable for your dog?
- Is it easy for you to store and safely prepare?
- Can it be fed in a manner that suits you and your dog?
- Is your dog physically thriving on it?
- Is it helping you maintain a healthy weight for your dog?

If you're unsure whether your dog's diet is right for them, ask your veterinarian for advice.

Learn more about nutrition and emotional wellbeing for your pets at [shine.waltham.com](https://www.shine.waltham.com)

