Homemade Diet Helps a Canine Companion

One little spaniel, presented to the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital with inflammatory bowel disease, had lost weight and was having difficulties with commercial diets despite medical management of her condition. After a complete background workup, the Nutrition Support Service was able to create a complete and balanced homemade diet that fit the needs of the patient, and was palatable to her as well! Her new diet included tofu, potatoes and vitamins. Within several days on the new diet her symptoms abated, and she began to regain her weight.

Questions? Call UC Davis’ Nutrition Support Service

Veterinarians are asked all kinds of questions about companion animal nutrition.

What if I want to give my pet a supplement?

If your pet is healthy and you are feeding a diet that has undergone and passed animal feeding trials in accordance with Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), there is no need to give your pet additional supplements. If you are feeding a diet that has not been tested or is unbalanced in any way, I recommend changing the diet to one that meets AAFCO criteria, rather than trying to balance it with extra supplements.

Some supplements may not cause any harm to your pet and will simply be excreted in the feces or urine. Many supplements can be toxic, especially when given in high doses, or they may potentiate adverse side effects. (For example, calcium supplementation in growing dogs of large breeds has been shown to cause the likelihood of developmental orthopedic problems.)

Occasionally animals with an underlying medical condition may benefit from additional vitamin or mineral supplementation, which should only be done under the direction of your veterinarian.

—Andrea Fascetti, DVM, resident clinician

How do I keep my cat from becoming obese?

Overconsumption of calories in conjunction with a sedentary lifestyle are the biggest contributors to obesity. Obesity can be avoided by reducing the caloric density of the diet by providing an AAFCO-approved “light,” “reduced fat” or “less active” formula diet. Free-choice feeding will rarely work for weight loss or maintenance of reduced body weight even with the most calorically restricted foods. It is more appropriate to provide the calculated daily food in at least two portions fed 8–12 hours apart. Also, increase the amount of exercise your cat receives each day. This easily can be accomplished by engaging the cat in play with balls or toys for 20 minutes per day.

—Denise Elliott, BVSc, diplomate ACVIM (American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine), resident clinician

Goose, the canine companion of veterinary student Cynthia Steele, posing above with his dream meal, normally gets an occasional treat such as a few of the dog biscuits, right. Veterinary Medicine News staff cats Buster and Annie are perfectly happy with their regular fare.