



Village Veterinary Practice Newsletter

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Thoughts on What to Feed your Dog

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Hours

M—Th: 7:45am—5:30pm
Friday: 7:45am—5:00pm
Call for Saturdays
House Calls Available

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Oh happy day! You have just acquired your new pet dog, your new partner in crime and best friend for life. When you go to buy the best quality dog food full of nutrients for your new pup, you are faced with dozens of different foods from many companies, all featuring shiny pictures of happy animals and proclaiming in large, bright lettering that their food is the best. Now what?

If you've been in this situation, you know there are just too many options and not enough concrete information to make a good decision. So how exactly should you go about picking out food for your pup?

Dr. Kelly Swanson, an Animal Sciences professor who teaches nutrition to students at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, provides these helpful points.

First, all pet food marketed as a "complete diet" must provide all the nutrients, including minerals and vitamins, necessary to support life. While that still leaves a lot of room for variation, at least it is a start: look for food labeled as a complete diet, not a treat or supplement.

The main difference among the myriad options lies in the ingredients used. Specific diets, such as "lamb and rice," indicate that a primary protein source is lamb and a major carbohydrate source is rice.

But what constitutes quality? That may be a matter of opinion. There is a difference between lower cost foods and the "premium" or "super premium" diets. Premium and super premium tend to be more nutrient dense and have better digestibility. Better digestibility can mean fewer "restroom" trips and possibly less gas. Yet that still doesn't mean that your pet cannot get all the needed nutrients from a lower cost diet.

The most important thing about your pet's food is that your pet likes it and is willing to eat it. The marketing is designed to entice pet owners, not the pet. Your pet can like a food without knowing that it is lamb, salmon, or all beef; he just likes it.

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Thoughts on What to Feed your Dog

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What about the specialty niches, such as organic or raw food diets? The term "natural" is vague and difficult to regulate; not much is excluded, and the quality of the food can still vary a lot. The word "organic" is regulated: an ingredient cannot be labeled as organic unless it produced in accordance with USDA standards for organic. However, there is no clear proof that organic is better than non-organic; once again it is pet owner preference.

One important consideration when choosing a food for your pet is the life stage of your pet. There is a difference in the composition and nutritional requirements supplied for different life stages. A puppy will need more energy as well as protein and some minerals for growth. Senior animal foods are often more nutrient dense because older pets may not be inclined to eat as much.

Foods marketed for specific breeds have not been proven to make a difference, at least not in the scientific literature. The exception is foods designed for very large breeds. The nutrient requirements for skeletal growth and maintenance for a Great Dane or Newfoundland differ from those for smaller dogs. It isn't always about the amount of food provided, but also the composition of the food.

And while we're on the subject of feeding, it is important to note that pet obesity is a serious condition that leads to many additional health woes. Whatever food you choose, it is important to maintain a healthy weight in your pet.



*Harmony
at the
dinner
table!*

So when it comes to picking a suitable food, concentrate on the life stage of your pet and whether he will eat the food. Remember that the marketing on the pet foods is aimed at you, the owner, not the pet. Tailor your food choice to fit your budget without feeling guilty. Bargain brands supply all the needed nutrients that a super premium food does. Just pick a food your new pet likes and enjoy your best friend for life.

Andrea Lin
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Indoor Cats Need Veterinary Care Too

Cats have won the battle over the dogs as America's most popular pet. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, there are approximately 10 million more cats living in homes across the country than there are dogs. However, despite the feline's growing popularity, cats are far less likely to receive routine veterinary care and vaccines than their canine competition.

There is no question that people love their purring felines, but why are the medical needs of these beloved pets overlooked? The most common reason we encounter a lack of veterinary care is simply due to a preconceived notion that if a cat is strictly indoors there is no need for annual vaccinations, and thus, no need for a yearly examination. With this common misconception, there is a large population of indoor felines going unvaccinated and living with pain, discomfort and disease.

Regardless of a feline's indoor or outdoor exposure, routine examinations and annual vaccinations are to simply maintain good health. Vaccines provide the body with the immunity to fight serious or life threatening diseases. One of the most important is the rabies vaccine. According to the Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association,

"Rabies is an increasing threat to cats. The number of reported feline rabies cases in the United States far exceeds that of all other domestic animals. Even indoor cats are at risk, as many rabid bats are found in homes where cats are present. Because of the routinely fatal outcome of infection in cats, and the potential for human exposure, rabies vaccination is highly recommended for all cats. Unvaccinated dogs or cats exposed to an untested or rabid bat are recommended for euthanasia (or alternatively 6 months quarantine) to protect the family from any potential exposure to rabies."

While vaccines are important, should an owner choose not to vaccinate the cat, a routine physical exam should still be performed at least once a year. Cats can be considered masters of disguise and are excellent at hiding illness and pain. In many cases, by the time the cat is showing clinical signs of illness, the disease process has become advanced, and in some instances untreatable. The time to catch a medical problem is during the early stage. A visit to the veterinarian is not only a time to evaluate the physical condition of a pet, but it is also an opportunity to discuss changes in the cat's behavior, diet, attitude and environment. Subtle changes in a pet's medical history from year to year can point to a problem that might otherwise be hiding.

Another reason cats are far less likely to visit the veterinarian is simply because they can be difficult to catch or they become too stressed when placed in a pet carrier or vehicle. This is where Village Veterinary Practice comes in. VVP continues to offer our house call services to those clients within the surrounding areas of our practices. House call examinations are a way to provide all patients with the care they deserve and can be far less stressful to the cat, and the owner, than a trip to the clinic.

Cats can be a wonderful addition to any family and each cat deserves to have the best life possible. Not only does that take love and care from their owners, but it also takes proper medical care to maintain health and longevity. We hope to see all our feline patients each year so they can continue to provide unconditional love to their families.





June Events

65th Annual LaGrange Pet Parade

June 4, 2011
9:30am—11:00am

22nd Annual Hinsdale Humane Society Pet Walk

June 5, 2011
8:00am—1:00pm

Clarendon Hills Daisy Days Pet Parade

June 18, 2011 @ 9:30am
Registration and Line up starts at
Walker School at 9:00am

Western Springs Gathering on the Green

June 24, 2011 @ 5:00pm
Come visit and chat with the VVP Staff!

The Grass is Dying!

Summer is here and your dream of having a lush, green lawn that is the envy of the neighborhood is being ruined by the urine of man's best friend. Why is this happening and more importantly what can you do to fix it?

The elevated concentration or acidic pH of your dog's urine is what is causing those unsightly patches of brown grass in your yard. However, if you want to keep the dream of a that stunning green yard alive, we have a few suggestions.

The first thing you can do is to simply rinse the area of grass that your pet has just urinated on with water from the hose. This will dilute the urine and save the grass. Unfortunately, with our busy lives, it can sometimes be difficult to get outside each time to rinse off the lawn. So, another option is to designate one area of the lawn that is obscure, or covered in smooth pebbles and train your dog to eliminate in that specific area only.

There are pet medications out there that claim to save your lawn, however we do not recommend the use of these products. These medications work by altering the normal pH of your dog's urine. When the normal pH of the urine is change, problems such as urinary tract infections, urine crystals and bladder stones can result. So please consider one of the first two options and may all your green lawn dreams come true!



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The Village Veterinary Practice Vision

Village Veterinary Practice was founded with the belief that companion animals deserve the best quality of life possible. Our vision is inspired by our patients, the devotion of their human families and the commitment of our veterinarians. It is sustained by the contributions of our compassionate, knowledgeable and dedicated staff and built upon a strong tradition of providing unsurpassed veterinary care for companion animals.

The Village Veterinary Practice Mission

Village Veterinary Practice was established to care for your pet as a family member. By utilizing the latest medical advances, sound guidance and desire, we strive to make the family pet bond an enjoyable, healthy and life enriching experience.