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From: lissa [lissa@lissa.net]
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To: ExtMAGDRL@yahoogroups.com
Subject: [ExtMAGDRL] DOE Topic #2: Raw Diets

Hi All,

I was talking to an adoption applicant last night and we got into a conversation about diet (go figure!) I gave the applicant information including the two different approaches (BARF and RMB), gave her suggested books and web sites on the topics. Finally, we discussed why I chose this route.

What a perfect topic for MAGDRL Dog Owner Education! Since feeding is a commonly discussed topic, thought I'd share the what I told her in case you're asked about raw diets. Note that some veterinarians are not 'raw-friendly', but most holistic vets and practitioners support this approach. I always encourage dog owners to do their own research and make their own decisions.

Through my research I learned that a dog's digestive system is unable to cope with grains, but many breeds easily pass it as fiber. Grains are cheaper than meats, so manufacturers of non-premium foods pad their kibble with it. That is why kibble-fed dogs produce so much stool when fed a commercial kibble (Kuna used to leave 'cow-pies', now that she's on raw she passes bullets!) Also, some dogs are allergic to grains, particularly corn, and they exhibit a wide range of health problems. In Great Danes, the higher incidence of bloat in recent history is thought to be related to increasing use of grains in commercial diets.

There are two mainstream approaches to raw diets: BARF (Biologically Appropriate Raw Food <http://www.drianbillingham.com/>) developed by Ian Billingham which includes raw vegetables and dietary supplements; and Raw Meaty Bones (RMB <http://www.rawmeatybones.com/>), a back-to-nature diet developed by Tom Lonsdale which mirrors what wolves eat in the wild. The latter is my choice since it's logical to me that the only vegetation our dog's genetic ancestors eat is what's in the stomachs of their prey.

One of my four just can't digest raw -- guess she's more 'evolved!' But since rawfeeding the other three, I have personally noticed the following changes:

1. Cleaner teeth -- Raw meaty bones naturally de-scale teeth of unwanted tartar (and avoids that \$200 teeth cleaning every 2 years!) Also, no doggie bad breath!
2. Less stool -- Dogs on the BARF diet produce firm stools that turn chalky in a few days. With four dogs in my home, it's one of the most appreciated benefits! LoL
3. Healthier dogs, less gas, no anal gland impaction, no ear infections, fewer skin allergies, and best of all, reduced licking!!!!
4. Shinier coats, less shedding, less body odor.
5. Stronger muscles -- The jaw neck and shoulder muscles are developed when ripping and chewing. The protein in the meat builds strong bones and muscles.

6. More energy -- There is no added sugar in this diet so dogs enjoy energy from naturally occurring carbohydrates. I saw a particular improvement in my older dogs -- even Kuna at age 6 YO is bouncing around like a pup!

Gotta mention that raw meat is a PIA to get home, package, and freeze, and feeding can be messy. But for me it's small price to pay for the improved health of my dogs.

How I started feeding raw:

I read, read, read everything I could find on the web, joined several raw feeding Yahoo groups, and bought/read both books! Then I decided which approach was best for my dogs. I made sure I had a nearby wholesaler, co-op, and other steady sources for a variety of raw meat. Raw feeders need to have freezer space to store meal-sized packs of meat (and mixings if you BARF.) I bought a chest freezer and I haven't seen the bottom of it since the day it arrived! Some folks grind the raw meat if they have dogs with teeth problems, otherwise best to let the bones do their job as natural teeth cleaners.

I started with the basics, raw chicken bones (backs, necks, wings, ribs.) Most feeders use this as the base of their dogs meals. Beef, pork, duck, lamb, venison, rabbit, fish, etc. can be added later. A dog needs variety in it's diet, so don't get stuck in a chicken-rut. Be careful to watch your pups as you add different meats -- one of mine can't do beef and I hear that's not uncommon.

For BARF-ers, vegetables can be fed raw or made into a mash with a food processor. If you choose to make a mash, add some raw eggs and garlic for flavoring.

Note that both diets suggest that you don't gradually switch over -- go cold turkey. Raw feeding takes different digestive enzymes than kibble, so if you change over gradually you're likely to have a dog who either regurgitates or has diarrhea. It's suggested that dogs are 'fasted' for a day before the switch and some owners add digestive enzymes to help their pups get started.

Thanks for educating yourselves to benefit all dog owners!

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"A dog is the only thing on earth that loves you more than he loves himself." - Josh Billings

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