A Natural Diet versus Commercial Pet Food.
How going natural can save you money on your vet bills

First of all, what is a natural diet? Is it packaged food you buy in the pet food isle at the supermarket or vet prescribed? It is the commercial food that says it has natural ingredients or claims to be a “natural pet food?” Is it the expensive food? None of the above. A natural diet consists of what I call “real food”. Real meat, fruit and vegetables. Like what our pets used to eat in the wild before we domesticated them.

**What does a diet of commercial food consist of?**
Commercial foods will promote and show lovely pictures of fresh ingredients they supposedly use in their products. In actual fact this is never the case. Commercial foods for pets generally do not use quality ingredients and if they do, there won’t be much of them present in the end product you purchase for your pets. Most meat used in cat and dog foods are “by products” or “meal” By products or meal are the left over parts like organ meat, beaks feathers etc.

Have a look at the back of your feed packaging or the examples we have provided below and look at the list of ingredients. Remember that the ingredients are listed in order of the largest quantity first to the lowest. Most commercial feeds will not have meat as their first ingredient. Usually it comes in at second or third. Those that do have it as their first ingredient usually have “by product” close second or a filler like wheat, corn or rice. All commercial feeds have a high quantity of grains as this binds the food and is a cheap additive. Much cheaper than meat, fruit or vegetables. Many commercial feed companies will tell you that grains are good for your dog as they are high in carbohydrates. This is biologically incorrect. In the wild, dogs would have very little access to grains and would not forage for grains in the wild. Infact, dogs need very little carbohydrate in their diets. 5% is their requirement and their energy needs are supplied from the raw fat in meat. Commercial feeds are supplying anywhere from 35% to 85% carbohydrates in their foods. Far too much for our dogs and cats.

Further down the list you will notice many synthetic vitamins are added. Synthetic vitamins are not readily absorbed in the body as natural vitamins and much nutrition in pet food is destroyed in the cooking process. Not to mention all the preservatives and colours added!

One manufacturer claimed they don’t like to talk about ingredients but rather talk about nutrition. They refuse to list their ingredients on their website. What have they got to hide? **FILLERS and poor quality ingredients!**
Chicken meal, brewers rice, chicken, ground yellow corn, beet pulp, chicken fat, natural flavor, brewers dried yeast, fish meal, powdered cellulose, fish oil, sodium caseinate, dried egg product, chicory extract, DL-methionine, potassium chloride, monosodium phosphate, choline chloride, calcium carbonate, L-lysine, salt, zinc propionate, vitamin E supplement, ascorbic acid, zinc oxide, manganese propionate, copper propionate, extract of rosemary, manganous oxide, iron propionate, copper sulfate, vitamin A acetate, niacin supplement, calcium pantothenate, sodium selenite, vitamin B12 supplement, vitamin D3 supplement, riboflavin supplement, pyridoxine hydrochloride, calcium iodate, thiamine mononitrate, biotin, folic acid.

What does a raw food diet consist of?
BARF (Biologically Appropriate Raw Food)
Real “raw” meat and real “raw” fruit and vegetables! A diet you can easily make at home yourself. This diet will be 100% more nutritious, far more tasty than any commercial food and keep your dog or cat in optimal health.

The following meats are appropriate for all dogs; Chicken, Duck, Beef, Pork and Rabbit. If you have a small dog it is generally better to feed more meat from small animals. If you have a large dog you can use all types of meat. Include meaty raw bones in the diet daily. It is great for keeping their teeth clean and a good source of natural calcium. If you decide to feed pork it is very important you freeze it for 2 weeks before feeding to your dog or cat. It has the potential to carry parasites and because you are feeding this meat raw, freezing will kill any potential parasites and make it very safe for your pets to eat. If you are suspicious of any meat having parasites, then freeze it to be safe. In Australia we need only be concerned with Pork. Remember to defrost before feeding to your pets.

Fruit and vegetables are a very important component to your dogs diet. You can use an array of fruit and vegetables. There are some that must be avoided; Leeks, onions and I avoid white potatoe. White potatoe has little nutritional value and is high in unnecessary carbohydrates.

Chicken, Chicken By-Product Meal, Corn Meal, Ground Whole Grain Sorghum, Ground Whole Grain Barley, Chicken Fat (preserved with mixed Tocopherols, a source of Vitamin E), Natural Chicken Flavor, Brewers Rice, Dried Beet Pulp, Fish meal, Dried Egg Product, Brewers Dried Yeast, Potassium Chloride, Salt, Vitamins (Vitamin E Supplement, Beta-Carotene, Ascorbic Acid, Vitamin A Acetate, Calcium Pantothenate, Biotin, Vitamin B12 Supplement, Thiamine Mononitrate (source of Vitamin B1), Niacin, Riboflavin Supplement (source of Vitamin B2), Inositol, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride (source of Vitamin B6), Vitamin D3 Supplement, Folic Acid), Flax Meal, Sodium Hexametaphosphate, Fish Oil (preserved with mixed Tocopherols, a source of Vitamin E), Calcium Carbonate, Choline Chloride, Minerals (Ferrous Sulfate, Zinc Oxide, Manganese Sulfate, Copper Sulfate, Manganous Oxide, Potassium Iodide, Cobalt Carbonate), Dried Chicken Cartilage, DL-Methionine, L-Carnitine, Rosemary Extract.
The key to feeding raw fruit and vegetables for dogs is to blend them to a pulp. Dogs and cats have the digestive enzymes to break down meat and bones. You will notice dogs do not chew their meat like we humans do. They chew just a few times and swallow. This is normal as their tummy will do the rest. Dogs and cats have a very acidic stomach. Much higher in acid than our own. They do not however, have the digestive enzymes in their stomach to break down fruit and vegetable matter. So we must break it down for them. Some people ask me why do we feed dogs fruit and vegetables, they didn’t eat this in the wild? Well they did. Before our pets were domesticated they hunted other animals. Most of these animals were herbivores. Upon the kill of a herbivore the hunter would immediately eat the contents of the stomach and intestines. All filled with digested vegetable matter. This is how our pets obtained their vegetables in the wild.

It is important to supplement your dog and cat to make sure they are getting all their vitamins and minerals. Especially more so if you feed a commercial diet. I will always feed Natural Animal Solutions Omega 3, 6 & 9 Oil. This provides your pets with the correct ration of Omega 3 to 6 oils. (Understanding this important ratio will be discussed in later articles). For those that show their dogs or cats, it will give them a shinier coat than any shine spray you can buy!

It is very important to add a multivitamin supplement like DigestaVite Plus or a good quality Seaweed. Seaweeds must be obtained from pure, clean waters. Natural Animal Solutions Seaweed is obtained from the fresh waters of Tasmania.

Some pets will find it difficult to change over to a natural diet. The key is persistency. Take away their old food. If they will not eat it then do not feed another food. They will soon get hungry enough and eat a natural diet. Most will take to it instantly and never look back to their old diet again!
How much do I feed?

Which one do you think your pet would rather eat?
Which do you think is healthier for your pets?

Jazmyn and Sullivan are both patients of mine. I converted both to a natural diet. Both are on Natural Animal Solutions Omega 3, 6 & 9 Oils and DigestaVite Plus, both won at the Weimaraner Championships and were the only two Weimaraners given the highest award for best coat.

Before visiting me in my clinic Jazmyn’s owners were considering have her spayed as she wasn’t considered good enough to be a show dog. A natural diet, good supplementation and she has become not only a show dog but a winning show dog.

How much do I feed?

Now I know you are asking, “How much of do I feed?” I have provided a basic feeding guide below.

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<tr>
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<th>Meat</th>
<th>Fruit and Vegetable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puppy</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20% Fruit/80% Vegetable Mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>60 - 70%</td>
<td>30 - 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly Dog</td>
<td>40 - 50 %</td>
<td>50 - 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
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"Hi Jacqueline,
Just a quick update on the weekend for you. I told you that we were going to Adelaide for the Weimaraner nationals, which are only held every 5 years. Well little miss Jazmyn won her class and got reserve bitch challenge to the bitch that went on to win the show. The best she has ever done at a show.
But most important she was graded excellent, and only one of 2 long hairs to have their coat also graded excellent. Guess who the other one was?? Yes, Sullivan. So thanks heaps to you.
Wendy
This is a guide only. Every animal and breed has a different metabolism and exercise regime. If your pet begins to put on weight reduce the meat portion of their diet. If they begin to lose weight then increase the meat portion of their diet. It is as simple as that!

It is very difficult to get most cats to eat vegetables. Don’t be concerned if they don’t eat vegetables as most won’t. This is why it is very important to supplement them with a multivitamin and omega oils.

**Why going natural will save you money at the vets?**

The filler, high carbohydrate content and lack of natural nutrition in commercial dog and cat foods over a long or short period of time will lead to many common diseases. Diseases that rarely existed before the introduction of commercial pet foods. Cats now have a greater risk of getting renal (kidney) failure from eating dry commercial foods. Cats are amazing animals and have the ability to live in the most dry and difficult environments. Why is this? Cats can absorb much of their water needs from fresh raw meat. They can obtain up to 80% of their water needs from meat. This is the natural way cats obtain a large portion of their water. By feeding a dry commercial food, cats are forced to drink more water. Cat food is commonly filled with corn, rice or wheat as their main ingredients. Ingredients a cat would never eat in the wild or eat if presented to them in their natural form of corn, rice or wheat.

A natural diet reduces your pets risk of getting many of the following diseases
- Arthritis and osteoarthritis
- Skin problems like dermatitis and itchy skin
- Ear infections
- Obesity
- Tooth decay
- Cancer
- Bad behaviour
- Diabetes
- and many more

Ask your vet for a natural alternative to cortisone and antibiotics. By doing this you are asking for a fix rather than a temporary cover up. Natural medicines and supplements are fast becoming available on pet store shelves and for vet use. Antibiotics and anti inflammatories are overly used and are creating stronger strains of bacteria that are becoming difficult or impossible to treat. If your pet is suffering from a chronic disease, try a natural alternative

One visit to the vet for some of the above diseases can cost you more than a year’s food supply. Some of the medications for these diseases can cost you thousands over the life time of your pet. A natural diet and correct supplementation will keep your pets healthy and reduce your need to visit the vet. This can potentially save you thousands.

Give a natural diet a go. You will see many positive benefits you never expected and your pets will thank you for it. I know mine pets have.

Jacqueline Rudan  
Animal Naturopath  
Australia