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Cashing In? No.

...although a recent arrival pushed the envelope!

BY NANCY KERNS

My husband likes to tease me about what he calls my “celebrity.” He started developing the joke when I made the mistake of taking him to a big dog show in the Bay Area. I was recognized by a few people, and I introduced myself to some others, and many of those people were nice enough to act as if they were glad to see me, and to praise WDJ. “You’re famous!” Brian started saying. “I’m living with a dog-world celebrity!”

This is especially amusing to Brian because he knows how much I value being anonymous. I turn down opportunities to be interviewed on camera and to speak publicly. I turn my ID badge backward when I attend conferences. I’m shy! Plus I find it far more interesting to see hear what company representatives have to say when they think they are talking to someone who doesn’t know very much.

But Brian is not the kind of guy who uses a joke just once; he’ll flog this one as long as he can. He complains when I buy dog food: “I know you could get that for free if you just asked!” If I raise my voice to our dog, he threatens to call the tabloids: “News flash! Whole Dog Journal Editor Nancy Kerns Abuses Dog!” And he keeps mock-encouraging me to “cash in.” At least once a week he asks me, “Honey, isn’t it time to sell out? Let’s get that deal for Whole Dog Chow going! Let’s get some product endorsements rolling!” We both work at home; maybe we see too much of each other.



Unfortunately, his behavior was randomly reinforced last month, when I received – completely out of the blue – the first big-ticket “freebie” item of my journalism career – and, not incidentally, the first WDJ-related item that held any interest to my husband whatsoever: a high-end, high-power vacuum, the Dyson Animal DC 23. Dyson simply asked me to consider the vacuum for a review. I *am* considering it, believe me; I’m considering it all over the house! (It’s a fantastic vacuum, the best I’ve ever used, but I promise to write a vigorous, thorough review of it in an upcoming issue.)

Now I just have to balance my enjoyment in having such a great vacuum against the onslaught of Brian’s newly inspired “dog celebrity” jokes. “Try to get us a new car, will you?” is the latest. “All you’ll have to do is say, ‘Lexus: It’s the best and safest car for dogs.’ How can that possibly hurt?”

Fortunately, Brian *is* joking. He understands that the one of the most important factors in WDJ’s success is its independence. Neither I nor my publisher is beholden to anyone; if my or my writers’ research turns up a rat in the pet food industry or anywhere else, we’re free to reveal it. It’s a dream job for a dog-loving journalist like me.

Now, if I could just stop feeling guilty about my newest favorite household chore, vacuuming!

NK

MISSION STATEMENT: WDJ’s mission is to provide dog guardians with in-depth information on effective holistic healthcare methods and successful nonviolent training. The methods we discuss will endeavor to do no harm to dogs; we do not advocate perpetrating even minor transgressions in the name of “greater good.” We intend our articles to enable readers to immediately apply training and healthcare techniques to their own dogs with visible and enjoyable success. All topics should contribute to improving the dog’s health and vitality, and deepening the canine/human bond. Above all, we wish to contribute information that will enable consumers to make kind, healthy, and informed decisions about caring for their own dogs.

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Help for the Stair-Impaired

Five things to do when your dog won't go up or down stairs.

BY PAT MILLER, CPDT-KA, CDBC

Occasionally I'll get a call from a client who is having trouble getting their dog to go up or down stairs – a frustrating dilemma when you want your canine companion to be able to accompany you wherever you go. First, be sure your stairs are covered with a traction-providing surface, so he doesn't slip and scare himself if he tries to use them. Next, here are some tips for overcoming this challenge:

1 Get a veterinary/chiropractic check-up. If your dog is hurting or otherwise physically challenged, it may be too painful or difficult for him to negotiate stairs. A chiropractic adjustment and/or pain-relief medications may have him scampering up and down in no time. If the condition cannot be alleviated enough to make him able to do stairs, you'll know it's time to stop trying, and find another alternative.

2 Carry him. Some small dogs (like our Pomeranian, Scooter) just aren't big enough to handle a full flight of stairs. Scooter can manage the two steps at the back door into the house, but not the full flight of stairs up to our bedroom, so I carry him up at night, and back down in the morning. If you have a small dog who doesn't like to be carried, you can teach him to go into a carrier, and tote the carrier up and down the stairs. You can also carry or use a carrier for a medium-sized dog who, for whatever reason, doesn't like stairs, but it's not a good option for a dog who is too large for easy lifting!

3 Provide an alternative. When we added a sunroom and new deck to the back of our house, my husband had the foresight to ask the contractor to build a ramp in addition to stairs, in anticipation of aging canines who might have difficulty with stairs. A few months later we adopted Scooter, who delights in using the ramp

to the deck rather than the stairs. If your geriatric guy is having trouble and a ramp isn't an option, you can use a towel as a sling under his abdomen to assist his back end up the stairs. This one's a stretch, but if you happen to live in a home that has a stair-elevator chair for a disabled person, teach him to use that!

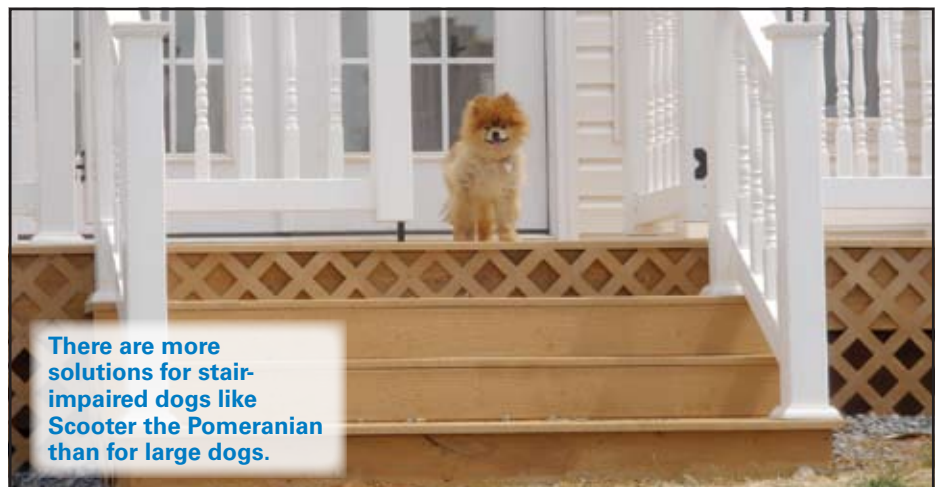
4 Shape it. Your dog may simply be afraid to go up and down stairs, and the more you pressure him to do it, the scarier it feels to him. Shaping allows the dog to make his own decisions and reinforces him for tiny pieces of "stair behavior" so he gains confidence. Just start at one end of the stairway – top or bottom, wherever he's more comfortable – and click (or use a verbal marker) and give him a treat for any small movement toward the stairs. No coaxing, no luring, just let him make all the decisions and all the moves. In time – faster for some dogs, slower for others, your dog will take one step up (or down) then another, then another, and finally be happily willing to do the entire flight. If you've done other shaping games with your dog this may go faster; if you and your canine pal are new to shaping this can take longer. (See "The Shape of Things to Come," WDJ March 2006.)

5 Back chain it. This is another solution for tiny to medium dogs – not practical for large dogs, but it can work like a charm with smaller ones.

Instead of starting at the bottom step and working your way up (or vice-versa), carry your dog up the stairs and set him down one step from the top. He sees safety just one step up and makes the attempt – one step is manageable for him, even if he's afraid of stairs – and goes for the top. Phew! He made it! Feed him yummy treats too, as added reinforcement for his superb effort.

Repeat that process just one step from safety until he does that happily and easily, then set him two steps from the top. Emboldened by his repeated success with one step, he's able to make the effort for two steps, then three, then four, until he can easily go up and down the entire flight without concern. Happy stair climbing! 🐾

Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC, is WDJ's Training Editor. Miller lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. Pat is also author of several books on positive training, including her latest: Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance for a First Class Life. See page 24 for more information.



Feeding People Food to Dogs? Oh, the Horror! . . . Not! Don't fall for the scare tactics used by this new pet food company

If you follow any pet-related blogs or other social media, the odds are you've heard of Nulo, a new company that has been marketing its foods aggressively through a variety of online channels.

Nulo's main thrust is that its foods and feeding programs will help your dogs reach and maintain a healthy weight – an admirable goal. Its foods are relatively high in protein (27 percent) with moderate amounts of fat (14 percent) and fiber (4 percent), appropriate for dogs who are overweight or who tend to gain weight easily. So I've had no objection to the marketing messages I've received from them (these messages were sent to members of one of the blogs I subscribe to).

Recently, however, a message went out from Nulo's marketing department with the subject line, "The Dangers of Feeding Pets Human Food." The enclosed article is entitled, "Why Feeding Your Pet Human Food Is Bad," and proceeds to try to scare the bejeezus out of anyone who feeds their pets any food that doesn't come out of a bag or can.

Sigh.

While I share the company's concern about overweight pets and the negative effect that fatty scraps and unhealthy foods such as French fries and potato chips can have on our dogs' waistlines, its claims go far beyond this.

"Few pet owners realize the dangers of feeding their animals human food." Hmm – just what do they think goes into dog food – special "dog chicken" and "dog rice"? We all eat from the same food chain; dog food is made from the same sources that we eat (though not always the parts we choose). It must be a miracle that dogs managed to survive for at least 15,000 years before pet foods were invented!

It gets worse. "Even the most discerning pet owners are feeding their animals the equivalent of human fast food, leading to a surge in obesity and diabetes in dogs and cats." Excuse me?

Those of use who feed our dogs a homemade diet use a combination of meat, eggs, fish, dairy products, grains, fruits, and vegetables. These fresh, high-quality foods supply better nutrition than can be

It's not a good idea to give our dogs our food when that food is not even good for us. But owners should not be made afraid to feed healthy "people food" to their dogs. We've been doing it for thousands of years!



found in any processed food. People who add ingredients such as these to their dog's commercial diet are improving the nutrition that their dogs receive. High-quality fresh foods do not contribute to obesity and diabetes in dogs as long as calorie intake is not excessive. And dogs fed high-protein diets have a greater percentage of lean body mass than those fed diets that are high in carbs, as almost all dry foods are.

In fact commercial foods, particularly dry foods, are far more comparable to "fast food" than most homemade diets. Convenient, quick, and processed vs homemade fresh foods – which sounds more like "fast food" to you?

Who are these people?

Curious as to who was behind this new product, I went looking for more information. It was surprisingly difficult to find any substance on the slick website. The "Who We Are" page contained no names nor credentials, just this: "We are pure. We are honest. We are fresh." Wow! Well, that's nice!

Nulo's FAQ page has over 80 entries. Under "Who makes your foods," no names appear, just more hype.

Ah, finally a name under item 42, "Who founded Nulo?" Michael Landa,

founder, chairman, and CEO of Nulo, has over 20 years of corporate development experience, according to the answer. (That explains the slick marketing.) His qualifications? He "has conducted extensive research" and "has become a recognized resource for the media on [pet nutrition and pet obesity]." He has made radio and television appearances. In addition, he co-founded a pet sitting and walking business. Oh, and he also owns a dog.

The original email I received from the company's marketing department contains more empty descriptions: "Nulo is a team of veritable pet advocates that promote wellness and nutrition for animals." (Veritable pet advocates?)

I have nothing against this particular brand of pet food, and I applaud the company's focus on keeping dogs at a healthy weight. But when any dog food company claims that its products are better than fresh, healthy, unprocessed foods used in a well-designed homemade diet or added to a commercial diet, I can't help getting upset. Using scare tactics to market products and making unsupportable claims such as "even the most discerning pet owners are feeding their animals the equivalent of human fast food" is just plain wrong. – *Mary Straus*

Dog Shootings by Law Enforcement Seem to Be on the Rise

Concerned owners discussing ways to better prepare police for handling dogs

In 2010, I noticed a surge in news articles concerning law enforcement officers who had shot a dog. Most recently, I read about an October 1 incident in Oakland, California, in which an officer responding to a home burglar alarm shot and killed the resident 11-year-old arthritic yellow Labrador Retriever. Another alarming article described the fatal shooting of Parrot, a pit bull-mix who had bitten another dog at a Washington, D.C., street festival but was already controlled by his foster parent when police grabbed and shot the dog. In another article, I read about two Labrador Retrievers who were killed in their own home – which also happened to be the home of the mayor of a small town in Maryland – when police served a search warrant *on the wrong address*.

Via YouTube.com, I learned of a case in which a police officer in LaGrange, Missouri, shot a dog who was clearly not a threat to anyone's safety at that time. The

video was shot from the police car – and then somehow widely circulated on YouTube. Two officers are present, but after one proves unable to maneuver the dog (who is secured by a control pole) into a truck by himself, he shoots the dog.

Horrified by this rash of cases, I started looking into how many dogs are killed by police. It appears that an average of 250-300 cases of officers shooting dogs are reported in the media every year. Randall Lockwood, PhD, ASPCA Senior Vice President for Forensic Sciences and Anti-Cruelty Projects, has also looked into this matter, and suggests that as many as another 1,000 cases may go unreported, for a staggering average of more than three dog shootings per day in the United States.

This issue is of concern to every citizen. Regard for canine life aside, every time an officer fires his weapon he also puts human lives at risk – as evidenced by a September shooting in which a Detroit police officer

who shot at a pit bull actually hit and wounded an animal control officer who was present during a raid on a home. There are simply safer and more humane methods to deal with most of the dogs that police officers must handle during the course of their difficult jobs. Officers should have the opportunity to receive training in how to assess the potential for danger from dogs, and how to use their non-lethal equipment to handle potentially dangerous dogs.

I've created a yet-unnamed online group whose purpose is constructive discussion and strategy development to combat the apparently growing incidence of law enforcement officers shooting dogs without adequate justification. Join by sending a message to copsshootingdogs-subscribe@yahoo.com. This is not a site to bash law enforcement, but rather to engage in constructive discussions to find and promote positive solutions to this problem. – *Pat Miller*

Police Shoot Dog, Seen on YouTube

The YouTube video that Pat refers to above makes a compelling case for the need to properly train police officers to handle potentially dangerous dogs. In the clip, a calm-looking dog (later said to be an American Bulldog) is shown chained to the back of a pickup truck. Additional footage, shot before this scene and also available on YouTube, shows two officers arriving at a mobile home where the dog is chained. One officer approaches the dog, who looks apprehensive but friendly; she wags her tail and allows the officer to put a collar and different chain on her. He leads her calmly out of the camera's view, and then there are about 20 minutes of silent video of the mobile home.

In the first frames of the next and most infamous clip, the camera swings around from its view of the home, and shows the dog, still on the chain, which now appears to be fastened to the back of a pickup truck (the truck turns out to be a police vehicle). The officers have been trying to get the dog into the truck. While the dog looks calm, the fact that the officer who earlier collared the dog will no longer get close to her hints that the dog's behavior (while off camera) has spooked him. He moves in and out of view, getting additional gear.

As the other officer observes from a distance, one hand on what appears to be a Taser, the first officer begins trying to snare the dog using a catch pole. Scared by the pole, the dog runs from one end of the chain to the other. The officers stop at one point, seeming to discuss what to do next and make cell phone calls; the dog lies down, putting her head on her paws.

One of the officers again tries the catch pole, this time capturing the dog, who panics and struggles to escape. The chain breaks, though the dog is still snared by the pole. The officer who had been watching transfers the Taser to his other hand, draws his service revolver, and aims it at the dog. The officer holding the pole struggles a bit more to control the dog; when she stands still for a moment, he takes advantage of the opportunity to draw his pistol and shoot the dog in the chest. She collapses to the ground, and her tail is seen wagging. About 20 seconds later, apparently to put the dog out of pain, he shoots the dog in the head, killing her instantly.

News articles fill in more details. The dog has been tied up by a neighbor, who called police several times to complain that the dog was running loose and had, on separate occasions, chased her daughter, her husband, and her leashed dogs. The neighbor asked the police to remove the dog, though she later said she felt bad about the dog's death.

The dog's owner had been found guilty in 2007 for failing to contain a vicious animal and had been banned from owning dogs for two years. In this case, he was fined for failing to register and leash his dog.

Lewis County, Missouri, where the incident took place, has no animal control officers. – *Nancy Kerns*



Cold Raw Facts

These frozen diets, comprised mainly of raw meat, offer truly premium nutrition for your dog.

BY NANCY KERNS

The more I've learned about the meat used in pet food, the more I've come to admire commercially produced frozen raw diets for dogs.

The meat and poultry used in most of these diets are far fresher and more wholesome – far more like what most of us would think of as “meat” – than most animal protein ingredients in dry (or even canned) pet foods. The products tend to produce terrific results in the dogs who consume them. Whether this is due to the ingredient quality or the fact that this type of diet is more biologically appropriate for canines than dry foods is anyone's guess. My guess is that both factors contribute to the success of the products.

A brief history of frozen raw diets for dogs

Before there were frozen raw diets, there were home-prepared raw diets. For decades, certain populations of dog owners fed their dogs diets that were largely

comprised of raw meats or fish – namely racing Greyhound owners (in the case of the former) and sled dog owners (latter). But few average dog owners in this country had even heard of raw diets until the 1993 publication of *Give Your Dog a Bone*, a call to arms written by Australian veterinarian Ian Billinghurst.

The longer he practiced veterinary medicine, Dr. Billinghurst recounts in the book, the more he became aware that the dogs (and cats) he saw in his practice were less fit and healthy than the pets he grew up with. How could that be, given all the wonders of modern veterinary care and “complete and balanced” pet food at owners' disposal?

Long story short, Dr. Billinghurst came to believe that it was all about diet. Australians embraced commercial pet food more slowly than Americans did, so when he was a kid, most people fed their pets the way humans have for hundreds of years: on scraps from the family's kitchen,



Raw frozen diets are available in a variety of presentations. They may be formed into patties or nuggets, or packed into plastic tubs, tubes (as seen above, also known as “chubs” or “sausages”), or vacuum-sealed “flat-pack” bags.

What you can do . . .

- Contact raw diet companies to determine the availability of their products in your area. In some spots in the country, there may be only one or two available to you at a reasonable price.
- When calculating the total cost of these diets, be sure to check the caloric content and feeding instructions, to determine how much your dog will probably eat per month. Don't forget to factor in any shipping charges.
- Check the “best by” date of any frozen product. Fresher frozen foods are better.
- If your vet is opposed to raw diets, make sure you find another, more supportive vet – preferably one who is familiar with raw diets – *before* you start feeding raw. Uneducated veterinarians have been known to blame a raw diet for *any* illness in a raw-fed dog.



including (most importantly) raw meaty bones. The dogs and cats of his youth were fit, not fat; they had nice clean teeth and fresh breath; and their poop was small and inoffensive.

During the period that Billinghurst spent in college, vet school, and his early years in practice, however, Australian pet owners (including Dr. Billinghurst himself!) embraced the convenience of commercial kibble. It took the veterinarian

some time in practice to develop the perspective to see what was right in front of him: that the overall condition of the pets he saw was declining. They had far more skin and coat problems than the pets of his youth, digestive issues were rife, and the state of their teeth! Ack!

After experimenting with the diets of his own pets (and eventually his clients' pets, too), Billinghurst concluded that dogs (and cats) do best when fed a biologically appropriate diet. For dogs, he determined that ideal diet to be comprised mostly of raw, meaty bones, which provide most of the protein, fat, and minerals needed by the dog, with supplemental amounts of other foods (organ meat, grains, vegetables, fruit, dairy, eggs) providing the balance of nutrients needed.

Billinghurst's book offered only rough guidelines – but tons of encouragement – for switching a dog to a home-prepared raw diet. He implored dog owners to give the diet a try and see for themselves whether their dogs' health improved. Billinghurst's concepts made sense to many dog owners, and many began their own experiments with "BARF" (bones and raw food or biologically appropriate raw food) diets.

As raw feeding became more popular, various approaches developed. Some people, uncomfortable with feeding whole bones to their dogs, grind raw meaty bones into a pulp before feeding them, while others use alternate sources of dietary calcium. Some people use grains or other carbohydrate sources; others spurn the use of carbs altogether. Then there are the "prey model" people, who try to reconstruct, as closely as possible, the type of diet they imagine that wild dogs would consume. They often eschew the inclusion of grains, fruit, and vegetables (and indeed, many supplements), except as occasional treats, relying almost solely on raw meaty bones and organ meat to feed their dogs.

Commercial sources evolve

As the population of raw feeders grows, commercial enterprises have emerged to serve them with a variety of prepared raw diets. Freezing the products is necessary, so the foods can be safely shipped direct to owners or to retail outlets.

Today, there are products available for every type of raw feeder: "complete and balanced" diets and ones meant for supplemental or intermittent feeding only; products that include bone and ones that use another calcium source. Frozen raw

diets are available at a wide range of price points; just as with more conventional pet foods, the price tends to (but might not, depending on the company's size and marketing budget) correlate with the quality and provenance of the ingredients.

Some companies produce foods for a very local market – retail stores in a few counties or a single state. Others have been able to grow their production and distribution to the national level; often these companies have piggybacked their raw frozen diets on the success of their other types of pet foods or treats.

The distribution of frozen foods, particularly in a small market, is challenging. Obviously, trucks equipped with freezers are needed to move product around the country. Most companies that use retail outlets have had to help retailers purchase special glass-front freezers that safely store and attractively display their products.

Companies that ship their products directly to consumers have to consider all the uncertainties that go along with using package delivery services, such as delays that are out of their control due to weather. Most ship only on Mondays or Tuesdays, so there is no chance that frozen products thaw on some truck over a weekend somewhere. To do this, they coordinate their ingredient procurement, production, and shipping schedules, so they have enough product to ship early in the week; even a half-day's delay can mean that some shipments can't go out for another week.

Ingredient quality and other considerations

As a rule (there are always exceptions) raw frozen diets usually contain extraordinarily fine, fresh ingredients. Maybe it's because frozen raw products are the least-processed of all the types of commercially produced foods you can buy for your dog, and you can see the ingredients with your own eyes (and smell the freshness or lack thereof); they haven't been altered into anonymity by processing. Or maybe it's because this entire segment of the pet food industry is aimed at owners who are seeking out the healthiest diet possible for their dogs – owners who are independent enough that they have not been frightened away by tales of deadly bacteria.

Really, it's only in this niche that you see so many pet food companies using only grass-fed animals who were humanely slaughtered, and locally sourced organic produce. That's amazing!

The thing is, it's not absolutely necessary. Even the products that use fresh or fresh-frozen meat from conventional sources are way ahead of the curve, quality wise, than manufacturers of conventional dry or canned pet foods. You simply can't make a safe, good-looking, fresh-smelling raw frozen product out of oxidized old meat scraps and compete in this niche. (Through the magic of rendering and extrusion or canning, you can, however, use pretty funky protein sources to make safe and appealing kibble or canned food; it's done all the time!)

High quality ingredients; raw, biologically appropriate nutrition; and the convenience of a commercially prepared, complete and balanced diet are the factors that bring some dog owners to this type of food. There are, however, a couple of things that may drive others away.

One is the potential for a fat content that is much too high for some dogs. Diets that contain only meat, organ meat, and ground bone obviously contain no carbohydrates, so their protein and fat totals will be high. It's possible that these diets will be too calorically dense for some dogs, especially inactive or older dogs. In this case, owners should seek out products that contain one or more carbohydrate sources and a lower fat content.

It's the fear of pathogenic bacteria, however, that scares the most people away from considering a raw diet.

The bacteria issue

For years, bacterial contamination of meat – and especially poultry – was the most potent tool that veterinarians who were opposed to raw feeding could use to try to dissuade dog owners from trying these "radical" diets. It's not enough, they warned, that you might make your dog sick; you could also sicken your entire family – and even kill a vulnerable family member – by having a bacteria-infested raw meat product in the house.

Today, most of us are aware that even the poultry purchased from your upscale supermarket for your own consumption is more than likely contaminated with *Salmonella*; the bacteria is *that* prevalent in conventional chicken-raising and -slaughtering operations. According to an article published in the September 2010 issue of the *Journal of Food Protection*, researchers from USDA and the University of Maryland mapped the distribution of *Salmonella* on young chicken carcasses.

They found *Salmonella* on 57 percent of the carcasses (which they obtained in various retail locations over a three-year period). Of the contaminated carcasses, almost 83 percent had more than one strain of *Salmonella* present.

Other bacterial pathogens commonly found on meat include *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) and *Clostridium difficile* (often called *C. difficile* or “C. diff”).

Good, basic kitchen sanitation and food-handling practices – and *cooking* – is what saves us humans (most of the time) from becoming sick from bacteria that’s on the meat and poultry we consume at home. People with immune-system disorders should avoid handling, or take extraordinary precautions when handling raw meat, whether the meat is for themselves or their dogs.

Very few raw-fed dogs contract infections from these common bacteria; the overwhelming majority of healthy dogs are able to combat the pathogenic challenge presented by these common bacteria.

However, raw diets are *not* recommended for dogs who are immune-compromised or receive immune-suppressant medications. Other poor candidates for a raw diet include dogs who are weak or debilitated with chronic illness, dogs with inflammatory bowel disease, or dogs who have suffered from pancreatitis.

What about the risks to humans from the pathogenic bacteria shed in the feces and saliva of raw-fed dogs? As author

CJ Puotinen explains in “Are Raw-Fed Dogs a Risk?” (WDJ July 2010), though it is *possible* for people to become infected with and get sick from pathogenic bacteria shed by their dogs, *it doesn’t appear to happen any more frequently to owners who feed their dogs raw diets than to owners who feed dry dog food*. In any case, zoonotic infections of all kinds can be prevented with basic infection control practices such as frequent hand-washing, especially after handling pet food, pet dishes, and pet feces. (See “Employ Common Sense and Basic Sanitation Practices,” below.)

Treated products

All of the companies that make their living by selling raw frozen diets take steps to buy wholesome ingredients, process them in a safe and sanitary manner, following a formal Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP, pronounced “hassip”) plan, protect them during freezer storage and shipment, and educate their consumers about the risks and benefits of feeding raw. But a few companies have taken additional steps to reduce or eliminate the risk to consumers caused by pathogens in their products: they treat their raw ingredients to kill any pathogens present. There are a few methods available for this purpose.

Most common among the producers of raw meat diets for dogs is a process that’s alternately called **hydrostatic high pressure (HHP)**, **high pressure process-**

ing (HPP), or **Pascalization** (after Blaise Pascal, a 17th century French scientist who experimented with the effects of pressure and vacuum). This process destroys or inactivates any organisms present in the food, without the use of heat.

According to a fact sheet published by the Ohio State University Extension, high pressure processing causes minimal changes in the fresh characteristics of foods: “Compared to thermal processing, HPP results in foods with fresher taste, and better appearance, texture and nutrition. High pressure processing can be conducted at ambient or refrigerated temperatures.”

In these high pressure processes, packaged food products are immersed in water and subjected to extremely high pressure; the water bath ensures that the pressure is equal on all sides, so the food product is not crushed as a result. (Imagine that you’ve dropped a grape into a full bottle of water; screw the top back on the bottle, and tightly squeeze the bottle. The grape can be subjected to tremendous pressure without deforming, because the pressure is equal on every aspect of the grape.)

Although relatively new, HPP is already commonly used to sterilize a variety of human foods, including fish, shellfish, fruit juices, jellies and jams.

A niche divided

Of all the methods available to treat raw meats to inactivate pathogens, including irradiation and ozone, high pressure

Employ Common Sense and Basic Sanitation Practices

In our opinion, the so-called “public health risk” of raw diets is overblown. Millions of people bring home raw meat and poultry every day. Despite the presence of bacteria in a certain amount of that meat, most are able to cook it and eat it without infection. If people employ scrupulous meat-handling and sanitation practices, and leave the consumption of raw meat to their healthy dogs, they should be able to keep their families safe.

Faithfully practice the following food safety guidelines:

- People with immune system disorders should avoid handling raw meat.

- Keep food frozen until you are ready to feed it. Then, thaw small amounts (only what your dog will eat within a day or two) in the refrigerator. *Never, ever* allow food to sit for long at room temperature.

If you need to thaw food in a hurry, seal it in a Ziploc bag and place it in warm water for not more than a few minutes.

- Wash your hands with hot water and soap immediately after handling the dog’s food.

- Promptly wash everything that comes in contact with the food with hot, soapy water: bowls, knives, grinders, countertops, and cutting boards. Periodically, use a disinfectant, such as a mild bleach solution.

- Discard any food your dog leaves in his bowl after eating. Don’t allow him to “leave it for later.”

- Immediately pick up your dog’s bowl after he eats, and wash it in hot, soapy water (or disinfect in a dishwasher). Never allow small children to handle the dog’s raw food or the bowl he ate from.

- Wash the dog’s *water* bowl in hot, soapy water daily, too. Many dogs drink right after eating, and could conceivably contaminate their water with bacteria in their mouths.

processing seems the least likely to cause controversy. However, its use has sharply divided the raw diet producers. Some spoke with embraced the technology as safe and natural (since nothing is added to the food); others voiced concerns that the pressure alters the molecular structure of proteins, and affects the food's enzymes, vitamins, and essential fatty acids.

Every meat-based business is concerned about pathogens. But the defensive postures held by individual companies vary. Some put their trust in mainstream human food industry mechanisms and processes; if it's good enough for human food, they reason, it's good enough for dogs.

Other players have focused on alternatives to conventional agriculture and its practices – the naturally fed, humanely slaughtered, “slow food” approach. This is appealing to consumers who favor a natural, holistic approach to health, but these operations are necessarily small-scale, so their products tend to be very expensive.

Still others have embraced a science-based set of solutions, relying on lab tests of ingredients and of every batch of product; in this sort of “test and hold” model, a company releases no product until it's tested negative for any pathogens. This approach is admirable in an age where pathogens are prevalent in the mainstream (human) food supply; it's also expensive.

In the end, it's up to you. Raw food products that have been treated to inactivate pathogenic bacteria are a useful option for some owners. Treated products may be especially appreciated by owners who are concerned about pathogens for the protection of a vulnerable family member or simply to win the support of a veterinarian who is opposed to raw diets. In contrast, natural food purists will probably shy away from diets that are pasteurized by any means whether or not there is credible evidence that the treatment method could be harmful. Consumers have to find their place on the continuum.

Selection criteria

On our list of top-quality products on the next pages, **we've included only the companies that offer complete and balanced diets** and are able to support either national distribution or, at least, distribution to a large segment of the country. Next month, we'll present a list of additional companies that sell frozen raw diets that are meant for supplemental or intermittent feeding.

If we've missed your favorite maker of

a complete and balanced raw frozen diet, just check to see if its products meet our selection criteria; if they do, rest assured that the diets are just as good as the products on our list. Here is our list of selection criteria for raw, frozen diets:

■ **A named, whole animal protein (such as chicken, beef, pork, duck, etc.) at the top of the ingredients list. No “generic” proteins (such as “meat” or “poultry”). No by-products.**

■ **A good source of calcium.** If raw, meaty bones are not used as the calcium source, another source will be needed to make the diet “complete and balanced.”

■ **Every other food ingredient (such as fruits or vegetables) should be whole and fresh; any grains present may be cooked but should be whole.** No low-quality grain by-products (such as “cereal food fines”).

■ **More information about the food than the minimum required by law.** The guaranteed analysis (GA) that is required on every pet food label need only contain the amount of protein, fat, moisture, and fiber found in the food. We feel most comfortable with products from companies who are able to share the complete nutrient analysis for their products. How can we feel confident that our dog is receiving “complete and balanced” nutrition if the maker can't tell us how much calcium or phosphorus is in its food?

■ **No added preservatives.** These aren't needed in a frozen food.

■ **No artificial colors.** These shouldn't be present in *any* pet food!

Selecting a product

With so many good frozen raw diets on the market, how should you select the right one for your dog?

■ **Price and local availability** will undoubtedly limit your options. Some of these products are pretty costly. It's no wonder; they are made out of very expensive ingredients! Products that can be purchased in local retail stores are generally (but not always) less expensive than direct-shipped products. Direct-shipped products might be the only option for those of us who live far from stores that carry raw

frozen diets. Only you know how much you can afford.

■ **Check to see make sure that it's fresh!** All frozen foods are more nutritious and appealing if they are thawed and consumed sooner rather than later. Look for a “best by” date; if the date/code lacks a date of manufacture, contact the company to learn the actual date of manufacture. Some companies suggest their products have a frozen shelf life of up to a year. Others aim to have their products consumed within three or four months of manufacture. If your preferred retailer doesn't sell enough product to keep their stock fresh, ask if they can better manage their inventory. Otherwise, you may have to find another source – perhaps a company that ships product directly to you.


■ **Look for ingredients that suit your dog.** Of course you've checked the ingredient list for quality; now examine it for any foods that don't agree with your dog. If he's allergic to or intolerant of certain proteins or grains, you need to make sure they are not in there.

■ **Check the fat content.** These foods can be extremely high in fat. That might be fine if your dog is an active athlete, but potentially dangerous for a dog prone to pancreatitis, as one example.

■ **Decide whether you feel most comfortable with a pasteurized product or an untreated one.** We've not seen studies that would lead us to avoid foods treated with a high pressure pasteurization process. But we also feel comfortable with feeding our dogs raw products from companies that use top-quality, naturally raised meats. You have to go with your own gut on this one.


■ **Switch it up.** We don't like to see any animal being limited to a static diet, comprised of nothing but the same protein for months or years . . . That's a great way to help your dog develop a vicious allergy to that protein, by the way. Instead, rotate among a variety of foods that contain different proteins. (That said, don't go out of your way to buy, in turn, diets that contain every protein available to pet food makers. Avoid a number of novel proteins so you can use them if you ever need to put your dog on an elimination diet to help diagnose a food allergy.)


COMPLETE AND BALANCED RAW FROZEN DIETS

COMPANY INFO	DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCTS, NUTRIENT INFO	HISTORY/ FORMULATED BY	AVAILABILITY
<p>Aunt Jeni's Home Made 4 Life Temple Hills, MD (301) 702-0123 auntjeni.com</p>	<p>Six complete and balanced diets are available. Each contains ground meat, organs, and ground bone from a single species (chicken, lamb, beef, rabbit, goat, turkey) as well as fruit, vegetables, whole eggs, and supplemental foods such as garlic, honey, flaxseed, and more. No vitamins or minerals added. Food is packed into tubs (like frozen cottage cheese).</p> <p>Complete nutrient analysis for each product is published on company website, alongside AAFCO nutrient values.</p>	<p>Formulations were developed by company founder, Jennifer ("Aunt Jeni") Boniface, who holds both a BS and an MS in Animal Science/Nutrition. Company founded in 1999.</p>	<p>Products available in select independent pet supply stores nationally; maker will direct-ship frozen product if no local retailers are available.</p>
<p>Bravo Raw Diet Vernon, CT (866) 922-9222 bravorawdiet.com</p> 	<p>Bravo Balance is Bravo's line of complete and balanced diets. Available in three single-species varieties: beef, chicken, and turkey. Each contains meat, organ meat, ground bone, vegetables, and a vitamin/mineral supplement. Products are available in frozen tubes or 4-oz. "burgers."</p> <p>Complete nutrient analysis for each product is on company website.</p>	<p>Parent company has roots in the meat business going back to 1942. Company owner and co-founder David Bogner's expertise is in the purchase, processing, packaging and distribution of premium quality meat products. Formulas developed with Dr. Greg Aldrich, founder of Pet Food & Ingredient Technology, Inc.</p>	<p>Sold nationally in more than 1,500 independent retail locations. No direct sales to consumers.</p>
<p>Darwin's Natural Pet Products Seattle, WA (206) 324-7387 darwinspet.com</p>	<p>Darwin's offers two lines of complete and balanced foods: Natural Selections is its premium quality line, and uses free-range, pasture-fed meats and organic vegetables. Zoologics is an economy-priced line, using "ordinary" human-quality meats and vegetables. Each line offers five single-species varieties: chicken, turkey, duck, beef, and buffalo. Each contains about 70% meat, ground bone, and organ meat; about 30% vegetables; and a vitamin/mineral supplement. Products are vacuum-packed into 1- or 2-lb. "flat-pack" bags.</p> <p>Guaranteed analysis includes fiber, pH of product, and calcium:phosphorus ratio. Complete nutrient analyses are available in hard copies for veterinarians or consumers upon request. "We are presently completing fatty acid analyses for all canine products."</p>	<p>Company founded seven years ago. Formulas developed by holistic veterinarian Jacqueline Obando, DVM, refined by Ed Kane, PhD, Animal Nutritionist, and lab-tested (at EXOVA, Inc., Portland, Oregon, formerly Bodycote Food Laboratory). "Steve Brown helps fine tune our formulas and develop new ones. Further fine tuning and advice are provided by holistic veterinarian Karen Becker, DVM; and Beth Taylor, co-author of <i>See Spot Live Longer</i> and <i>Dr. Becker's Real Food for Pets</i>.</p>	<p>Products are available nationally direct to the consumer from the manufacturer, or through select holistic veterinary practices. They are not available at retail.</p>
<p>Fresh Is Best, Inc. (Formerly Companion Natural Pet Food) Milwaukee, WI (866) 617-7735 freshisbestinc.com</p>	<p>Four single-protein, complete and balanced diets are available: beef, turkey, duck, chicken. Diets include meat, ground bone, organ meat, vegetables, other food supplements (such as apple cider vinegar and kelp), and a vitamin/mineral supplement. Products are available packed in 8-oz. "sausage rolls" or 2-lb. tubs.</p> <p>Complete nutrient analysis is available for each product on company website.</p>	<p>Company president and founder Stacy LaPoint chose the ingredients to be used in the recipes, then sought the professional consultation of Dr. Keith Cummins, of Auburn University. Dr. Cummins manages data calculations/comparisons and makes sure that everything meets AAFCO nutritional profiles for all life stages in dogs.</p>	<p>Sold in retail stores regionally (Wisconsin and Illinois); also offered direct-to-consumer via company website.</p>

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INGREDIENT CLAIMS	MANUFACTURING INFO	FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM
<p>Company sources all of its ingredients, utilizing local farms whenever possible. All vegetables are GMO-free, no pesticides, and only organic fertilizers used. The meats are hormone- and antibiotic-free, grass-fed, and free-range.</p>	<p>Company owns and operates its own FDA-inspected facility. All of its food and treats are manufactured there.</p> 	<p>"We use only ingredients that are in the human food stream, inspected and approved for human consumption.... We use state-of-the-art traceability software so ingredients can be traced from the source to the end user.... Strict HACCP program.... Periodically submit random samples of finished goods to independent labs to test for pathogens.... We also perform daily internal testing for pathogens... Our animal-sourced ingredients are not sterilized; this would negate the raw quality of the food ingredients by destroying the integrity of the fragile enzymes, vitamins, and amino acids. We believe that using HHP pasteurization, irradiation, or other methods compromises appearance, palatability, and the raw status.</p>
<p>Bravo sources all of its ingredients. "We use only antibiotic-free poultry and red meats, with no grain, preservatives, added hormones or unnecessary additives.... Earlier this year, we moved manufacturing of several of our beef and lamb products to New Zealand. We can now offer better quality meats, direct from the ranch to finished product on site, with fewer manufacturing steps and less handling of the raw ingredients. As a result, we can more easily control manufacturing and deliver a fresher, better quality product to the consumer."</p>	<p>"We own and operate our own USDA-inspected and certified manufacturing facility in Manchester, CT. Our facility is one of the very few in the country to meet the USDA standard for processing both pet food and human grade products. Our manufacturing partner in New Zealand meets an equally high standard for processing and quality regulated by their USDA equivalent, the New Zealand Food Safety Authority."</p>	<p>Safety is a top priority... We follow all of the USDA and FDA guidelines for manufacturing raw diets. We also are experts at preparing and protecting the product as it moves through the manufacturing process. Raw meats are always stored at proper temperatures and are treated with all-natural washes to reduce the likelihood of contamination without compromising the nutritional value of the end product.... Since 2007, we have tested every batch for pathogens before it leaves the factory. The results are posted on our website. We do not use high pressure processing or irradiation; we believe this process reduces the nutritional value of the food.... We work only with distributors who are experts in the storage and shipping of our raw products to our retailers. Our retailers are equally vigilant about product safety.</p>
<p>Darwin's sources its own ingredients. "All of our products are from the western U.S. (CA and WA) except buffalo (from ND) and duck (from IN). We have visited each farm, processing facility, or met personally with our suppliers. It is important to us that each feed animal had the best possible life. We embrace Temple Grandin's philosophies in processing.... Darwin's Natural Selections (our flagship product) is produced with free-range, antibiotic-free, hormone-free meats and organic vegetables.... ZooLogics uses conventional human-quality meats and vegetables.</p>	<p>The company owns and operates its own manufacturing facility. "We produce our meals at a constant 28-36 degrees Fahrenheit to minimize pathogen growth. The finished meals are immediately returned to a solid frozen state (-10° F) after production. We produce one meat-source per day to minimize cross-contamination, then our production equipment is sterilized in advance of the next day's production."</p>	<p>"Darwin's utilizes standard HACCP manufacturing polices and procedures. Periodically we test select incoming meats for protein and fat content at Exova Labs. We test products from all new suppliers for protein and fat and compare these with computer simulations.... Because fats, especially polyunsaturated fats (from poultry) can oxidize when frozen, we ensure that our products are fed within three months of production. We do not include fish oils, because these are too fragile to survive in the freezer, especially when mixed with minerals (even in the form of amino acid chelates). This helps ensure that our dog customers are not consuming rancid fats....Our animal-sourced ingredients are not sterilized. We are looking into natural pathogen control additives such as plum extract and natural occurring microphages to digest bacteria."</p>
<p>"Our diets are made from conventionally raised, USDA-inspected, human-quality meats. Most of our vegetables are certified organic and from Wisconsin farms.... We have launched a new organic and sustainable line of frozen chicken dog food available in stores (not yet offered on our website). This is made from 100% certified organic chicken and vegetables. The ingredients are raised and processed in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The product is packed in biodegradable plastic casings that break down in the landfill within 2 years."</p>	<p>"Our frozen pet food products are manufactured at a local sausage plant in Milwaukee, WI. It is a small, state-inspected, family-owned plant with fewer than 10 employees. We have staff on-site when our products are being made."</p>	<p>"Our co-packer, a human food processing plant, follows a HACCP plan that is required by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture for safe/sanitary handling/processing of meat. Inspectors are on-site every day and quality is carefully monitored. Our products are not sterilized at this time. We may incorporate HHP if needed in the future, but have not had a call for it from our customer base"</p> 

COMPANY INFO	DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCTS, NUTRIENT INFO	HISTORY/ FORMULATED BY	AVAILABILITY
<p>Nature's Menu Lake Geneva, WI (866) 333-3729 naturesmenu.com</p>	<p>Complete and balanced diets come in five varieties: beef, lamb, turkey, chicken, and organic chicken. Each contains about 80% muscle meat and 20% organ meat and has a vitamin/mineral supplement added. Diets do not include bone, but utilize high-quality calcium carbonate and "pure milk calcium" as sources of calcium. Products are available in 1/4-lb. patties, packed into 3-lb. bags.</p> <p>Crude fiber is included in the guaranteed analysis.</p>	<p>Company founder Rose Estes developed the formulas with assistance from board-certified veterinary nutritionists Dr. Gary Pusillo and Dr. George Fahey. Contract Comestibles used to manufacture the product for the Estes family; then the company bought Nature's Menu.</p>	<p>Sold at select vet clinics, pet stores, and health food stores in WI, IL, IN, LA, NE, and OR. Direct shipping available to anywhere in the continental U.S.</p>
<p>Nature's Variety Lincoln, NE (888) 519-7387 naturesvariety.com</p>	<p>Available in seven varieties: organic chicken, chicken, beef, bison, lamb, venison, and rabbit. Only the organic chicken, beef, and lamb varieties contain proteins from a single species. Chicken variety contains chicken <i>and</i> turkey, turkey liver, and turkey heart. Bison formula also includes beef kidney. Venison variety also includes lamb heart, lamb liver, and lamb bone. Rabbit formula includes pork fat, pork liver, and pork heart. All varieties include fruit, vegetables, and other food supplements; none contain a vitamin/mineral supplement. Product is available in "medallion" or "patty" form. Company is the only manufacturer whose raw diets have been substantiated as complete and balanced for all life stages of canines using AAFCO feeding trials.</p> <p>Full nutritional analyses are available on company website. Analyses are based on actual wet chemical testing of the finished product, not from computer models.</p>	<p>Products are formulated to mimic an animal's ancestral diet. Diets formulated by a team, including a pet food consultant with a PhD in nutrition, professional formulators, meat industry experts, and our Director of Research and Development (who has a PhD in Biology with continuing education in Nutrition). Diets have been on the market for nearly 10 years.</p>	<p>Products are available in the U.S. and Canada, from online and independent pet retailers and some veterinary clinics.</p>
<p>Pepperdogz Bellevue, WA (866) 866-3649 pepperdogz.com</p>	<p>Four complete and balanced varieties are available: bison, chicken, turkey, and beef. Each type is about 70% muscle and organ meat and 30% whole fruits, vegetables, and food supplements. Ground eggshell is used as calcium source; no vitamin/mineral supplements are included. Product is made into 1/2 lb. patties and sold in 5 lb. bags.</p> <p>Guaranteed analysis includes calcium and phosphorus. "We are in the process of obtaining a complete nutritional analysis of all our foods. This information should be available on our website by the end of this month."</p>	<p>Company founded by Sean and Karen Youssefi in 2002. Diets are formulated in consultation with Jacqueline Obando, DVM, a holistic veterinarian who champions the cause of raw dog food.</p>	<p>Available in retail outlets in Washington, Oregon, California, and Colorado.</p>
<p>Primal Pet Foods San Mateo, CA (866) 566-4652 primalpetfoods.com</p>	<p>Primal offers nine complete and balanced, raw frozen formulas, eight of which contain a single-species protein source: beef, chicken, duck, lamb, pheasant, quail, rabbit, and venison (the ninth is turkey and sardines). Each contains meat, ground bone, organ meat, and organic fruits, vegetables, and other food supplements (such as kelp, alfalfa, and salmon oil). All formulas are grain-free and gluten-free. Each product is available in 1 oz. nuggets, 8 oz. patties, and 5 lb. chub rolls. Food sources are used to supply specific vitamins or minerals; a vitamin/mineral premix is not used.</p> <p>A full nutrient analysis for each diet is available.</p>	<p>Primal was established in 2001. "Primal Formulas, our complete diet line, was originally developed and formulated as a collaboration between the company's founder and a local holistic veterinarian."</p> 	<p>Sold nationally through independent pet food retail outlets. Primal will direct-ship to consumers who don't have a retailer nearby.</p>

INGREDIENT CLAIMS	MANUFACTURING INFO	FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM
<p>"We strive to make our diets economical enough for the average person to afford. We source all the ingredients. We buy boxed frozen beef that has been USDA downgraded as 'not for humans.' Turkey is end-of-day overruns from a large turkey grinding operation. Chicken is from regular mainstream chicken production.... We also carry lamb and organic chicken; both are USDA-inspected and passed for human food, and in accordance with all regulations for humane handling.... These diets are more expensive due to the cost of the raw materials."</p>	<p>Products are manufactured at Contract Comestibles. "We make, store, and ship the products ourselves.... Contract Comestibles is a small food manufacturer with about a half-dozen workers. We specialize in contract manufacturing primarily of human food. The process for making Nature's Menu diets is intentionally low-tech and as natural as possible."</p>	<p>"No chemical, radiation, or high-pressure techniques are used on Nature's Menu diets. We recommend that people handle our meat diets as they would any other raw meat product in their home. After an initial adjustment to a raw diet, healthy animals, as well as many unhealthy ones on their way to better health, do not suffer from the bacteria that may be present in the diet."</p>
<p>"We source all of our ingredients for our raw products based on quality, nutritional profile, availability, and vendor reputation.... We source ingredients domestically and internationally; we have done our homework and know these are the best suppliers. In addition, we require our vendors to go through a certification and approval process.... All of our meat sources are raised and slaughtered humanely."</p>	<p>"We own and operate our state-of-the-art raw manufacturing facility, cold storage, and dry warehouse. At present we do use a co-manufacturer for the HPP process.... This co-packer undergoes audits and certification on a regular basis."</p> 	<p>HACCP system in place. "We have written and implemented a comprehensive quality and vendor manual, employing six individuals to oversee daily production, vendor compliance, and overall plant sanitation. Part of our QA program requires our raw diets to be sent for HPP processing, followed by a pathogen test and hold procedure on every lot of finished goods.... Routine microbiological and chemical testing is performed on all products. We have an internal microbiology lab that does all non-pathogen raw material, finished product, and environmental testing. We use a third-party lab for wet chemicals, which assures regular and routine verification of guaranteed analysis and other chemical parameters on a routine basis."</p>
<p>Pepperdogz sources local, USDA-inspected bison and all nutritional supplements. Co-manufacturer sources all other ingredients. All poultry is USDA-inspected, local, cage-free, hormone- and antibiotic-free. Beef is USDA-inspected, local, with no added growth hormones. Vegetables and fruit are local and whole. Supplements are all products of USA.</p>	<p>Co-manufactured at a state-inspected facility near Portland, OR, equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, where other premium-grade pet foods are made.</p>	<p>Manufacturer follows a HACCP program and is equipped with an advanced metal detection system. All ingredients are stored in stainless steel containers and maintained at -25° during manufacturing, before product is formed and sent to the blast freezer, where they are flash frozen at -10 degrees. Product is maintained at 0 degrees while in storage and during transportation to the warehouse facility....We are currently investigating the advantages and disadvantages of HPP, which eliminates food born pathogens (but) can also destroy some beneficial bacteria.... We do not use irradiation."</p>
<p>Primal sources all of its ingredients. "All Primal products incorporate 100% USDA human-grade meats, poultry, and game from the U.S. and New Zealand. The meats and poultry are raised antibiotic-free with no additional hormones. All fruits and vegetables used in our products are domestically sourced and we primarily use certified organic produce. Primal sources all proteins from farms and ranches that utilize sustainable farming practices as well as humane animal care practices."</p>	<p>"Primal operates its own manufacturing facility in San Mateo, CA. In addition, Primal utilizes the services of co-manufacturer in Portland, OR."</p>	<p>"Primal production facilities follow strict HACCP programs to ensure food quality, freshness, and safety. HACCP programs are in place to track product time and temperature from the arrival of raw materials to the completion of final product. Primal production facilities are inspected by the USDA and State Department of Agriculture. Detailed sanitation programs are in place at both Primal facilities and strict sanitation practices are implemented as part of our standard operating procedures. Primal implements random testing to ensure nutritional integrity and food safety of all products."</p>


COMPANY INFO	DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCTS, NUTRIENT INFO	HISTORY/ FORMULATED BY	AVAILABILITY
Raw Advantage Kettle Falls, WA (866) 331-5185 rawadvantage petfood.com	<p>Two complete and balanced products are available: Organic Turkey Dinner and Organic Chicken Dinner. Both diets contain about 50% meat and ground bone, 36% organic slow-cooked whole grains, 9% organic vegetables; the balance is organic whole food supplements. A vitamin/mineral supplement is not used. Both diets are available in 1 lb. chubs.</p> <p>Guaranteed analyses also include fiber, ash, calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium content. Additional nutrient information available upon request.</p>	<p>Company founded in 2001 by Ara Bush, educated in human food science and experienced in the human health food industry. Formulas "are the result of more than 15 years feeding and formulation by holistic vets, primarily Douglas Yearout, DVM." Formulas also influenced by books by Richard Pitcairn, DVM, and Ian Billinghurst, BVSC.</p>	<p>Available in retail outlets in 27 states, mostly in west. Direct shipping available for those outside the current distribution area.</p>
Stella & Chewy's Muskego, WI (888) 477-8977 stellaandchewys.com	<p>Four complete and balanced diets are available: beef, chicken, lamb, and a duck/goose mix. Each contains meat, organ meat, raw ground bone, organic fruit and vegetables, food supplements, and a vitamin/mineral premix. Available in small or large patties.</p> <p>Guaranteed analyses only. "We are making some minor changes to our vitamin/mineral mix and the products will be re-analyzed in the coming weeks for publication on our website."</p>	<p>Formulations by two professors of animal science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison: Thomas Crenshaw, PhD, Animal Sciences; and James Claus, PhD, Food Science.</p>	<p>Products are available nationally, only through independent pet retailers. No direct sales to consumers.</p>
Steve's Real Food for Pets Murray, UT (801) 784-8364 stevesrealfood.com	<p>Offers four complete and balanced diets: chicken, turkey, "turducken," and beef. Meats are ground with bone included; same-species organ meats are also included. Each contains vegetables, fruit, gluten-free rice bran, flaxseed, and sardine/anchovy oil. Available in 1/4-inch nuggets and 8 oz. patties.</p> <p>Full nutrient analysis is available for each product.</p>	<p>Products were formulated by company founder Steve Brown. CEO Gary Bursell has 30 years in the pet food business starting with Nabisco and American Nutrition.</p>	<p>Products available in pet supply stores and via online retailers; company does not direct-ship to the consumer.</p>
Vital Essentials Green Bay, WI (800) 743-0322 vitalessentialsraw.com	<p>Three complete and balanced products are available: beef, chicken, and tripe. Each includes meat, organ meat, ground bone, kelp, and a vitamin/mineral supplement. Available in "nibblets" or patty form. Note: This is a new company, built on the foundation of Animal Food Services and Nature's Advantage. "We are the most tenured raw diet manufacturer in North America, making a prey-model diet for dogs, cats, and zoo animals since 1968."</p> <p>Guaranteed analysis for beef and chicken varieties includes ash, calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium. Other info available upon request.</p>	<p>"Diets developed in 1968, designed after the diet of the 'Alpha' male and female as they would eat in their natural habitat. Comprehensive composition of vital whole organ ingredients – heart, liver, lung, kidney, tripe – comprising 45% of the diet." Formulated by company founder Warren "Gerry" Nash and Richard Patton, PhD, animal nutritionist.</p>	<p>Products are sold nationally and internationally in pet specialty stores, vet clinics, health food stores, farm & feed outlets, and zoos. Approved for export to the EU and Canada.</p>



DOG DAYS— All Year Long!

For a dog lover, this is the perfect calendar! Not only will you meet a dozen of the most winsome, lively calendar canines we could find, but also, each month you'll get timely, pertinent guidance for keeping your own dog healthy and happy throughout the year. Each month is introduced with tips for everything from heartworm prevention to the importance of proper ID for your dog.

Whole Dog Journal's 2011 Calendar is generously sized to make it easy for you to fill in birthdays, anniversaries, vet appointments, and all the dates you need to remember.

INGREDIENT CLAIMS	MANUFACTURING INFO	FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM
<p>Raw Advantage sources all of its ingredients; sources are listed on the company website. 100% grown and harvested in the U.S., reputable sources used in the human health food industry. "They are not only humane, but also sustainable certified organic growers. Pasture-raised, the best of the best."</p>	<p>"We own and operate our manufacturing facility. We are registered with the FDA and USDA and have been designated a Certified Organic Processor by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. We offer tours of our plant."</p>	<p>We have a 'good manufacturing practices' plan that includes HACCP and FDA recall procedures. We annually test the guaranteed analysis and randomly test for bacteria using outside labs. We've never had a detectable level of bacteria reported on our product. We use temperature control and safe handling procedures throughout transportation and processing to ensure safe and healthy products. We've purchased raw materials from the same vendors for over a decade. To further ensure ultimate quality control, all products are produced in 100 lb. batches.</p>
<p>"We source all of our own ingredients. All of our meats and poultry are sourced in North America. Beef and lamb are pasture-fed; chicken and duck are cage-free. All meat and poultry is free from added hormones and antibiotics. All fruits and vegetables are certified organic. We use a U.S.-manufactured vitamin/mineral premix, as well as a freeze-dried, natural probiotic."</p>	<p>"We manufacture all of our own products in our FDA-inspected facility in Muskego, WI."</p> 	<p>"We have used a patent-pending 'Secure By Nature™ Food Safety Process' since January 2007. It encompasses HHP, a strict HACCP plan, and plant sanitation procedures.... We employ a "test and hold" policy. All testing is done at an outside lab. We test every batch for <i>Salmonella</i> and <i>E. coli</i>. We post these test results on our website; customers can match the batch code on any Stella & Chewy's product to the test result on our website."</p>
<p>Ingredients are sourced by the company and its co-manufacturer. The beef products are grass-fed, hormone-free, and from Oregon and Washington. Fruits and vegetables are from Del Monte. They are triple-washed and pesticide-free.</p>	<p>"We are partnered with Interstate Meats in Clackamas, OR, who developed equipment for the extrusion pump process for our nuggets. The equipment is installed at a plant in Aumsville, OR, and includes Formax as well as extrusion processing of frozen nuggets and patties."</p>	<p>"The plant is kept at low ambient temperature so that the raw material can be kept at 37 degrees or below when processing. All employees wear smocks, hair nets, and white gloves while processing. Quality control and raw ingredients must be kept at the highest level to avoid contaminants that would require sterilization."</p>
<p>All meats are USDA-inspected and passed, from family farmers in Wisconsin; beef is grass-fed except in winter. Animals are humanely harvested, system designed by Temple Grandin.</p>	<p>Company owns and operates its own USDA-Certified Pet Food facility in Green Bay, WI; establishment number A-27506 USDA shield is present on all packages. Strategically located two blocks from beef harvest facility. Fresh raw materials arrive daily; harvest to package in less than 72 hours.</p>	<p>Monitored internally and also by on-site USDA inspection personnel; HACCP program; comprehensive sanitation program; FDA audits and inspections. Raw materials are processed at 32 degrees F or less. Random/periodic sampling and testing of finished food, including compositional analysis. We do not employ HPP, HHP, or irradiation due to the degradation of nutritional value, along with the detrimental chemical and physical changes that occur in the food as a result of these processes.</p>

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True Confessions

... of a raw feeder/breeder.

BY DENISE FLAIM

You know you've been feeding raw for a long time when it no longer seems like a radical, ground-breaking, or – ubiquitous adjective for beginners – scary way to feed.

When I started feeding raw – a dozen years and three generations of Rhodesian Ridgebacks ago – it was the Middle Ages of raw feeding. Ian Billingham's *Feed Your Dog a Bone* was the hard-to-find illuminated manuscript (the lax editing could have stood some sprucing up by Benedictine monks), and everyone used the unfortunate acronym BARF, which stood for “bones and raw food” (or, later, the loftier-sounding “biologically appropriate raw food”). No commercial raw diets were available, and new converts dutifully ordered their Maverick sausage grinders over the Internet. The instruction booklet said the table-top grinder couldn't be used on any bones harder than chicken necks or wings, but everyone ignored that. I can still remember the painful whirring of the motor, and then the crackles and pops as the thin ropes of ground meat and bone came out the cylinder.

Early days

Like many people, I started feeding raw reactively, not proactively. I had a new dog, my first show dog and first Ridgeback, who just wasn't thriving on kibble. I remember setting down Blitz's first raw meal with great fear and trepidation. And then – anticlimax – he didn't choke, die, or even look at me cross-eyed. He ate, he thrived, and off we went and never looked back. Three more adult Ridgebacks followed, and dozens of puppies, who in turn had puppies of their own. All got their start in life on raw-food diets.

Back then (and still today), the Holy Grail of raw feeders was a quality meat

source at affordable prices. Through local dog folk, I learned about Armellino's, a butcher in nearby Huntington Station, New York, who was a wholesaler of naturally reared poultry – chickens and turkeys raised without hormones or pesticides. Joe Armellino was your go-to guy for a free-range Thanksgiving dinner. And he had turkey necks – dare I hope? Did I hear that right? – for a bargain 79 cents a pound.



Just a few of Denise Flaim's healthy kids, canine and human. Having raw food and raw-fed dogs and puppies in the house has never harmed Flaim's triplets.

By my second or third trip there, as I gratefully accepted my 10-pound bag of turkey necks, Joe asked me quizzically, “Are you starting a soup business or something?”

“No,” I replied with a chuckle. “I grind this stuff up for my dogs.”

And as I explained my feeding regimen – the noise, the blood, the guts, the *time* – lights started going off for Joe. Maybe he could buy a commercial grinding attachment. Maybe he'd order that BARF book. This was a bit of back to the future: His father, who had owned the business before him, used to sell minced meat for dogs.

Today, 12 years later, my dogs still eat at Joe's. His business has gone to the dogs – literally – and his store walls are lined

with dog photos, from Danes to Dachshunds, who get their sustenance there. Joe doesn't do mail order, he doesn't do any fancy packaging or marketing. He just gets the meat directly from the source, grinds it, puts it in 2- or 5-pound sleeves, freezes it, and then sells it to the steady stream of doggie customers who are now a major part of his business.

Passing it on

My puppies are weaned on Joe's ground food mixed with evaporated milk at four weeks old. When the pups are around six weeks, I tell their new owners what I'm feeding, instruct them to order a good multivitamin and fish-oil source (for those nifty omega-3s), and have them stop by to visit Joe. (If they're not local, many will invest in a freezer and schlep back for a food run every few months.)

I also provide them with a list of “don't panic” points, including, “Don't freak out if you don't see your puppy drinking a lot. Her food is so well-hydrated, she won't be constantly lapping up water like her kibble-fed counterparts.”

The three main problems with raw feeding for newbies are the time, the cost, and the learning curve. Joe solves the first two: His food is convenient (just thaw out overnight, dump in the bowl, and add supplements) and affordable (about the same price as a high-quality kibble).

As for the learning curve, I've fed this family of dogs for more than a decade. I know what to expect in terms of their growth needs. The biggest advantage to feeding raw is being able to control what you feed. (Which is the disadvantage to commercially prepared raw diets along with, frankly, price.) I am sure an Alaskan Malamute breeder instructs her puppy people to feed differently than I do, as would a Yorkie breeder. Our dogs, in their

genetic programming, process food differently. So when my Ridgeback puppies hit 4 months, and their ears start doing a Sally Field (hello, “Flying Nun”) because teething is taxing their little bodies, I know to increase the calcium and fat in their diets, and I can literally watch their crimped ears flatten and their flat feet knuckle up.

Such breed-specific nutritional knowledge doesn’t happen in a decade, or two. I am fortunate in my breed to have a long-time mentor, Alicia Hanna of Kimani Kennels. She’s taught me how to reverse rickets in Ridgebacks; that’s what the above description is, really. And she drove home for me the importance of the old British saying “Half the pedigree goes through the mouth” – you really are what you eat.

Getting vets to buy in

Veterinarians are often the biggest obstacle to owners who would like to feed raw. And I understand why: They are worried about owners who will take shortcuts and compromise their dog’s health in the process, far more than any fear of salmonella contamination. (Your garden-variety smoked pig’s ear carries a similar risk.)

Any skeptical vet I have ever encountered has been put at ease when I tell him or her these two things: First, I know the source of my dog’s meat, which is raised as holistically as anything I can buy in the supermarket for my own consumption; and second, I understand the importance of having a calcium source. This meat has a more-than-adequate bone content, and it’s finely ground to the consistency of hamburger meat to mitigate any issues of perforation or compaction. (Supposedly, grinding the bones negates any teeth-cleaning benefit, but life is nothing if not a series of compromises. And that’s one I can live with.)

“Well,” the vet invariably says. “You’ve done your homework. But the average pet owner isn’t as conscientious.” Maybe so, but it’s my job as the breeder to instruct my puppy people on how to feed correctly. And there’s a huge piece of me that thinks the lowest common denominator is a terrible place at which to set the bar.

All this is not to say that raw-feeding doesn’t have its drawbacks. Last year, I almost lost a litter of puppies when they contracted enteritis, an intestinal bacterial infection, presumably from the constant licking of their very fastidious raw-fed dam. Desperately watching as my puppies

faded, and unsure what to do, I put them on a liquid antibiotic, and they all rebounded. Now, all my expectant mothers go to a cooked diet with added carbohydrates for increased milk production about halfway through their pregnancy until the puppies are weaned at eight weeks.

It works, it works, it works

After that close call, why do I continue to feed raw, you might ask. Because in all the years I have been feeding this way, I haven’t had any major health issues with my dogs. They stay vibrantly healthy and look like a million bucks. The longer I am in dogs, and the more I talk with old-time breeders who themselves are becoming an extinct breed, the more I take this simple truth to heart: Health shows from the inside out. No matter how fantastic a pedigree, it can be ruined by bad nutrition and bad rearing. Common sense prevails: Dogs need sunshine, exercise, and good, whole, hydrated food.

Dog people – especially serious dog people – like to get all self-righteous about how they feed. It’s our way or the highway. I want my puppies to be raw-fed and I strongly encourage that way of feeding (just as I do minimal vaccination and pesticide-free landscaping), but in the end I realize I don’t have control. And I also realize that changes in lifestyle and economics



A dog’s or puppy’s health shows from the inside out. No matter how fantastic a pedigree, it can be ruined by bad nutrition and bad rearing.

also impact how we care for our dogs. In an ideal world, they shouldn’t, but who lives in an ideal world all their life?

My Ridgebacks aren’t the only litters I have around the house: My human kids consist of 6½-year-old triplets. When they were toddling, I was concerned about bacterial cross-contamination. And the cost of diapers and formula (I’m holistic, but breast-feeding triplets? – I’m not *that* holistic!) was beginning to make a real dent in our budget. So I began cooking the Armellino food, boiling it up in a pot with a grain source such as barley, to stretch it a little further. I did that for about two years, until the kids were bigger and could be trusted not to, say, lick the dogs’ food bowls or stuff fistfuls of raw turkey in their mouths.

But it wasn’t until I looked back over that time that I noticed some subtle changes in my dogs. They were still generally healthy on the cooked, carb-loaded diet, but I noticed an increased frequency of acute problems: the occasional ear infection or impacted anal sac, for instance. A homeopathic vet suggested I start a journal to note these little changes, and if I had followed that advice during that period, I’m sure I would have noticed additional “nickel and dime” changes that the cooked food brought – and not for the better. If ever I needed proof of the price we pay when we destroy the enzymes and nutrients in our dogs’ food by cooking it, there it was.

So, in my heart of hearts, do I think raw is better than home-cooked is better than canned is better than kibble is better than plasterboard? To be honest, yes. But do I think I loved my dogs any less by making the lifestyle and economic concessions that I needed to, when I needed to? To be honest, no.

In the end, what raw feeding taught me were the same life lessons we all take to heart: Never act out of a place of fear. Embrace common sense. (If whole foods are good for us, why should our dogs be any different?) Keep things simple. Act locally. (Thank you, Joe.) And master the use of the prepositional phrase “In my experience” at the beginning of any sentence involving a controversial subject like raw feeding. Because your experience is your experience, whether others agree or not. 🐾

Denise Flaim of Revodana Ridgebacks in Long Island, New York, shares her home with three Ridgebacks, three 6½-year-olds, and a husband.

Doggie Daycare: Yay! or Nay?

Daycare can improve some dogs' behavior, and aggravate others. How do you decide whether it's right for your dog?

BY PAT MILLER, CPDT-KA, CDBC

The term “doggie daycare” has become a panacea in recent years for all manner of canine behavioral ills. Does your dog engage in destructive chewing? Nuisance barking? Rude greetings? Poor canine social skills? Mouthing and biting? Separation anxiety? Just send him to doggie daycare, and all will be well. You hope.

I'll admit I'm as guilty as the next trainer of suggesting a daycare solution for a huge percentage of my behavior consult clients. The fact is, many of today's canine companions suffer from a significant lack of exercise, stimulation,

What you can do . . .

- Research your community's daycare options well and be willing to travel a reasonable distance so you can make the best choice possible for your dog's daycare provider.
- Interview your prospective providers thoroughly to ensure you cover all the important questions about service and safety.
- Ask for at least three references. Ask the references some of the questions you asked the provider in the interview, and see if the answers match.
- Trust your instincts. If you're not completely comfortable with the answers to your questions and observations about the facility, look elsewhere.



Not even a rainy day can dampen the enthusiasm of most active young dogs for outdoor, social exercise! It helps when the daycare staff is also willing to go out and play in the weather – and towel the dogs off when they come back inside.

and social time with their own kind. A good daycare provider can go a long way toward meeting those needs. But daycare is not the one-size-fits-all answer that we would like it to be; there are many factors to take into consideration before enrolling your dog in your friendly neighborhood doggie hangout.

Who shouldn't go to daycare

Not all dogs are appropriate daycare candidates. Just because they are a social species doesn't mean all dogs get along with each other. Humans are a social species and *we* certainly don't all get along! It's important that you honestly evaluate your dog's personality and behavior to determine if he has the potential to do well at daycare. If he plays well with others, is comfortable and confident in public, and doesn't mind being separated from you, then daycare may be a fine choice. If any of those are questionable, proceed with care.

If your dog doesn't enjoy interacting with other dogs, he'll likely find daycare a very unpleasant experience, and his dislike of dogs will probably get worse.

When the planets are aligned just so – with a well-managed, highly trained staff and a perfect set of playmates – *some* dogs who are mildly fearful of other dogs may develop greater social skills and ease around their own kind. But many a dog-fearful dog has become reactive-aggressive as a result of being forced into proximity with other canines. Total immersion in dogdom is *not* an appropriate behavior modification or management plan for a dog who is intimidated by his own kind. Many dogs simply become less dog-playful as they mature, and a day at doggie daycare is not the fun party for them we imagine it is. Of course, geriatric dogs and those with medical conditions should not be asked to endure the rough-and-tumble play of dogs at a daycare center.

Is Dog Daycare Just What It Sounds Like?

Anything you can observe about daycare for children can be said about dog daycare. Both types of daycare are intended to be a safe place for the family member to spend the day socializing, taking part in some enriching activities, exercising in a space and with toys that exceed the offerings at home, and learning and/or practicing some basic manners.

A dog's schedule in a daycare facility may resemble that of a daycare child and include unstructured play in a large group; structured play in smaller groups (fetch, playing on agility equipment); snack time (food-stuffed Kongs or chewing time in a crate or individual kennel); and nap or "quiet time" (perhaps also in crates or kennels).

"Parents" of both types of daycare attendees have the same goals: to bring home a family member who is healthy, happy, and tired. Their concerns are similar, too: An injury that leads to a medical bill; an experience that instills fear or anxiety; and the emergence of unwanted behaviors (such as biting, aggression, bad manners).

Daycare facilities range from fantastic to downright funky. Sometimes the attractiveness of the facility is proportional to the cost of care, with large or extravagantly equipped daycare costing a lot more than smaller, bare-bones sites. Exceptions to this rule are common in urban centers; however, in places where demand is high, even a crowded and shabby daycare may be able to charge premium fees for care. – *Nancy Kerns*

Undersocialized dogs who are environmentally fearful and/or afraid of *humans* also do not belong at puppy playschool. While a dog who was rescued from a puppy mill or a hoarder may feel more comfortable in the presence of a pack of dogs because that's what he knows, he can be difficult, perhaps even dangerous, for staff to handle. If something should happen – he escapes, or is injured and in need of treatment – the situation goes from bad to worse. The escapee will be impossible to catch, and is likely to head out in a beeline for parts unknown. A fearful dog who must be cornered and restrained by strangers for treatment in an already high-stress environment is very likely to bite, perhaps with alarming ferocity as he struggles to protect himself from what he may perceive as his impending death.

A canine bully or any dog who is otherwise offensively aggressive toward other dogs is also not an appropriate daycare attendee. Don't think sending him to daycare will teach him how to play well with others. It's more likely to do the exact opposite! He'll find it quite reinforcing to have the opportunity to practice his inappropriate bullying or aggressive behavior – and behaviors that are reinforced invariably increase and strengthen.

Finally, dogs who suffer from separation anxiety are often horrible candidates for daycare. (For more about separation

anxiety, see "Scared to Be Home Alone," WDJ July 2008.) Owners of dogs with separation anxiety often hope their dogs will relax in the company of other dogs and humans, and trainers often suggest daycare as a solution for the dog who is vocal or destructive when left alone. But if your dog is at the extreme end of the separation-distress/anxiety continuum, sending him to daycare doesn't make him any happier, and only makes those who have to spend the day with him (canine and human) stressed as well. True separation anxiety – in which

the dog has a panic attack if separated from the one human he has super-bonded to – is not eased by the presence of other dogs or humans. Less severe manifestations of isolation/separation distress *may* be alleviated by a daycare provider. Be honest with your prospective provider about your dog's separation-related behavior, and see if she's willing to give it a try. Be ready to celebrate if it works, and look for another solution if it doesn't.

Perfect candidates

In contrast, if your dog loves to play with others, doesn't have significant medical problems that would preclude active play, and has energy to spare, he's the ideal candidate for doggie daycare. This professional service, offered by a high-quality provider, is the perfect answer to many a dog owner's prayers.

Perhaps you have a friendly, active young dog, and you just don't have the time you would like to devote to his exercise and social exposure. You come home exhausted from a grueling day at work and he greets you with a huge grin on his face, his wagging tail clearly begging for a hike in the woods or an extended session of ball-retrieve. If you don't exercise him you risk the emergence of inappropriate behaviors such as chewing, but you are just too tired, and you have to work on a project, due tomorrow. Daycare, even one or two times a week, can be the perfect outlet for his boundless energy, give him the social and dog-play time he covets, and relieve you of the oppressive guilt of not being able to take him for that hike.



Dogs who get picked on – or who seem to be in fear of being picked on – need to be moved to a group with fewer, smaller, and/or gentler play companions.



All prospective daycare attendees should be screened for their ability to get along with other dogs in every type of circumstance.

You may not know whether your dog is an appropriate daycare candidate until you show up for your interview and the staff assesses your dog. *Note: if the facility you're considering accepts your dog without an assessment, look for another provider.* Even if your dog passes the assessment, daycare staff may advise you after a visit or two that your dog is stressed and not enjoying his play experience there. If that's the case, you remove him from daycare, and/or inquire about possible behavior modification programs to help him have more fun at dog play.

Be choosy

One of the pitfalls of suggesting daycare to clients is the dearth of high-quality providers in most areas. If you are considering sending your canine pal off to a professional dog-sitting facility for the day, you want to be confident that he'll be as safe and happy in their hands as he is in yours. You should see each prospective provider's facility (preferably when dogs are present), and talk to its manager and staff.

You may need to make an appointment in order to get the best tour of a daycare facility. There are times (especially in the morning during peak drop-off hours and in the afternoon during peak pick-up hours) when it will be extremely difficult to spare a staff member to show you around. Call ahead and ask when it would be best to see the facility.

As you visit facilities and interview managers and staff, observe the dogs that are present in the daycare centers. They should appear happy, not stressed. Staff

should *also* appear happy, not stressed, and be interacting with the dogs. The environment should be calm and controlled, not chaotic, and your take-away impression should be one of professional competence as well as genuine caring for dogs. Trust your instincts. If anything doesn't seem right, don't leave your dog there. If staff says you cannot observe the dogs, we suggest walking away. (See "No Viewing 'For the Dogs' Safety?'" next page.)

One of the most important things to ask about is the **dog to staff ratio**. This can range from 10 dogs or fewer per staff person to as many as 20 or more dogs per caretaker. "Obviously, the fewer dogs per person, the more closely supervised your dog is likely to be, and the less likely any canines are to get into trouble," says Robin Bennett, co-owner of All About Dogs Daycare in Woodbridge, Virginia.

Cost is also an important factor, but don't select your provider by cost alone; neither the lowest-priced nor the highest-priced facility may be suitable for your dog. Depending on where you live and the specifics of the facility, cost per day can range from a few dollars to \$40 or more per day. Facility specifics vary. "The daycare may be operated out of a private home or a multi-staffed, full-service facility," says Bennett. "Multi-staffed facilities are naturally costlier, but can offer a much wider range of services to meet the needs of individual dogs."

Speaking of **services**: In a full-service facility, trained staff members keep the dogs busy with indoor or outdoor play, or even, in some cases, happily munching

snacks and watching movies made just for the entertainment of dogs. Activities might include hide and seek, tag, or anything that canine minds can come up with. Many facilities provide a variety of toys and balls to enjoy, and some even have swimming pools! Some also offer training, from good manners to agility and more. Good daycare centers also include rest time so dogs don't get over-stimulated by having too much fun.

Other things to ask about include:

■ **What is the assessment process?** If they don't assess, run away fast. If they do, be sure you're comfortable with the things they tell you they will be doing with your dog, before you let them do it.

■ **What vaccinations do they require?** Make sure you're comfortable with the requirements. Don't compromise your dog's physical health by over-vaccinating or administering unnecessary shots just to satisfy daycare. If they ask for vaccinations you'd prefer not to give your dog, see if they'll accept a letter from your veterinarian stating that in her opinion your dog is adequately protected.

■ **How do they determine appropriate play groups?** Your Maltese should not be in a play group with a Great Dane, or vice versa. Nor should a body-slammng adult Labrador be playing with a space-sensitive Border Collie puppy. If you get the proper answer (play style, size, and age) make sure your observations of the groups playing support their answer.

"To minimize risk of injury, dogs should be separated based on play style, size, and age," says Bennett. "Keep in mind that accidents and injuries can happen in all facilities. Dog daycare is like a child's playground, and by allowing dogs to play together there is a risk of injury. Collars can present a hazard during dog play, but dogs without collars have no visible identification. Discuss this conundrum with your potential provider to see how they handle it, and be sure you are comfortable that escape risks are minimal at the facility. You should see multiple doors within the facility to the playrooms and secure high fences around outdoor play yards."

■ **Do they feed the dogs treats?** If so, are the treats a type and quality that is compatible with your dog's diet

– especially if he has allergies or you are committed to high quality foods? Can you provide your own treats to give him, and if you do, can they ensure he gets your treat and not the others? If you ask them to refrain from feeding treats, or limit the amount, will they?

■ **What kind of dog handling and behavior training does the staff receive?** What training books and authors do they recommend? What tools do they use? Staff members should be reading books by the growing list of positive, science-based author-trainers. If dominance-based television celebrities are held in high regard, run away fast.

■ **How frequent are serious incidents, requiring staff intervention, of inappropriate behavior between dogs?** These should be rare. If they happen more than a few times a year, the facility has a serious problem.

■ **How do they deal with incidents involving inappropriate behavior between dogs?** Incidents should be defused by separating dogs calmly, only using physical tools such as water, loud noises, blankets, and boards if absolutely necessary. Squirt



Play groups should be comprised of dogs who are compatible in size, age, and play style, and all the dogs should appear to enjoy themselves.

bottles and noise aversives should not be *routine* management tools. Verbal and physical punishments, including shock collars, are totally and completely unacceptable. There should be planned debriefings after an incident occurs to determine what went wrong and prevent a recurrence. Solutions include putting dogs

in different play groups, or asking offenders not to return unless and until adequate behavior modification has been implemented.

■ **What if a dog is injured?** Do they have a regular consulting veterinarian who is available during all daycare business hours? If not, is there an emergency clinic available? Will they transport to *your* veterinarian if that's your preference? Who pays the vet bill?

The provider should notify you *immediately* if your dog is seriously injured, either by another dog or some other physical mishap, and honor your preference for veterinary care if at all possible. There are reasonable arguments on both sides of the “who pays” question, but you should be aware in advance of their policies so you're not surprised.

■ **Has a dog ever escaped?** If so, how did it happen, and what have they done to prevent future escapes?

■ **Has any staff ever been bitten by a dog?** If so, what were the circumstances? Was the bite reported to authorities? (In many jurisdictions, all dog bites are technically required to be reported, but often

No Viewing “For the Dogs’ Safety”?

In the San Francisco Bay Area, like other urban centers with high dog populations, there are dozens of dog daycare facilities. Many of the businesses are high-volume facilities, with more than 100 dogs “enrolled” in daycare on any given day.

A few years ago, I made it a point to try to see as many of the daycare facilities as possible. Some were built with lobby-type areas from which a visitor could view the entire facility. At one, there was sufficient staff on hand to allow a front-desk person to give me a quick tour of the behind-the-scenes boarding and “napping” areas. A few were more private, permitting very limited viewing of the main daycare area only. At the most private one I saw (from the outside), a sign at the front entrance indicated that a look inside is possible by appointment only; the business’ website further explained that “for the safety of the dogs, certain areas are restricted.” Not even the enrolled dogs’ owners are allowed to view some areas, and the hours during which owners may drop off and pick up dogs are restricted!

The usual explanation for a “no-viewing” policy is that the sight of visitors can cause the dogs to get excited. It’s true that at the daycare facilities where a visitor *can* view the dogs at play, there are always at least a few dogs who *do* react to the

appearance of a stranger (or their owners). On the other hand, at the facilities with (what seemed to me to be) an adequate staff-dog ratio and/or dogs separated into small groups of 10 or fewer, this didn’t seem like much of a problem. A dog or two barked; a handler spoke to them or redirected their attention; and that was that.

I don’t think it’s a coincidence that the “no visitors” or “limited access” facilities are also the highest-volume businesses I saw. By standing on my tip-toes on the stoop of the business that allowed no pre-arranged visitors, I could see over a fence for a limited view of one play yard; it contained at least 40 dogs. I could see two handlers in the area with the dogs at that time, but it’s possible there were more handlers present in areas I couldn’t see.

In my opinion, having this many dogs in a relatively small space is potentially dangerous, and puts the dogs (and employees) at risk. That doesn’t mean that it can’t be done; I worry that it can’t be done without incident – or without the regular use of aversive training methods to keep any misbehavior from cropping up. (Which could be, I worry, the *real* reason why some daycare providers never permit viewing or unscheduled owner visits.) – Nancy Kerns

are not unless they are serious enough to require medical attention.) If your dog bites and is reported, he will likely have to be quarantined for a period of time (often 10 days) and the incident may trigger “dangerous dog” legal proceedings. Bites can happen. But if the facility you’re considering has a history of *lots* of dog bites, there’s a serious problem.

Few options?

If you don’t live in a relatively affluent urban area, daycare providers can be hard to find. Word of mouth is a powerful tool; ask all your dog-owning friends and your dog-care professionals if they can refer you to a good facility. Search the Internet, starting with the website for the Pet Care Services Association at petcareservices.org or (877) 570-7788. You can also check

with the Better Business Bureau and your local Animal Control agency, to see if there have been complaints or problems with the providers you’re considering. If choices in your community are limited, you’re better off passing up the daycare opportunity than choosing to leave your dog in the hands of a sub-standard care-provider.

Other alternatives to professional daycare include arranging play dates with dogs your dog already knows and loves; using social media to connect with other owners in your area who may be looking for dog-play opportunities; asking your dog-care professionals (trainer, vet, groomer) if they have clients who may be interested in having their dogs play with yours; and asking friends, family members, and neighbors who have dogs of their own if they might be up for small-scale daycare duty.

The benefits of dog play are numerous, and it’s well worth the effort to find a professional facility that can help your dog be as happy, well-rounded, and well-exercised as he deserves to be. If no daycare facilities exist in your area and you happen to have the skills and interest, you could think about starting one yourself! 🐾

See page 24 for contact info for Robin Bennet and All About Dogs Daycare.

Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC, is WDJ’s Training Editor. Miller lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. Pat is also author of several books on positive training, including her latest: Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance for a First Class Life. See page 24 for more information.

The Poop on Daycare Cleanliness

One of the challenges inherent in operating a doggie daycare center is that dogs poop and pee – and the more a facility feels like a dog hangout rather than a home, the less inhibited most dogs are about pooping and peeing there. You may wonder if sending your dog to daycare will damage the housetraining habits you’ve worked so hard to install. It depends, in large part, on the sanitation standards of the facility. The better the facility, the more attention they pay to cleanliness.

For cleaning purposes, daycare floor surfaces are usually bare concrete or covered with rubber mats of some kind, or occasionally vinyl. Most homes don’t have floors of cement or rubber, so unless you’re a rare exception, your dog isn’t likely to start having accidents in your home on your carpeted or hardwood floors even if he occasionally eliminates in the daycare center. More importantly, a good facility provides adequate outside time, either in supervised exercise areas or via on-leash walks, to minimize the number of accidents indoors. Indoor grass litter boxes can offer appropriate indoor potty areas for those days when inclement weather precludes outdoor time.

A significant part of the “eliminate here” invitation at a daycare center is the

lingering odor of past feces and urine deposits. For those inevitable indoor accidents, a good daycare provider has on-the-spot cleaning protocols, so staff immediately removes any waste and cleans the area thoroughly with an enzymatic cleaner designed to counteract pet waste. If your cleaning procedures in your own home are equally rigorous, the absence of elimination reminders in your house also minimizes the potential for a breakdown in your dog’s housetraining manners.

Bedding at a daycare center inevitably becomes soiled from time to time as well. Cleaning protocols should dictate

immediate removal and daily washing of dirty bedding so those odors don’t linger to suggest to canine clients that random elimination is welcome. Fresh bedding should be provided every day even if it *wasn’t* soiled the day before.

In fact, aside from the pungent scent of a just-happened “oops,” unpleasant odors in a high-quality daycare facility should be virtually non-existent, just as in a well-run boarding facility. In your mission to find a top-notch daycare for your dog, if your nose can discern the musty, lingering smell of inadequate sanitation practices, keep on looking.



A daycare facility should have enough staff members so that someone is available to clean up messes immediately.

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RESOURCES

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

Terry Long, CPDT-KA, DogPACT, Long Beach, CA. Terry is a writer, agility instructor, and behavior counselor. She provides pre-adoption counseling, behavior modification, and group classes in pet manners and agility. (562) 423-0793; dogpact.com

Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Fairplay, MD. Train with modern, dog-friendly positive methods. Group and private training, rally, behavior modification, workshops, intern and apprentice programs. (301) 582-9420; peaceablepaws.com

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (AHVMA), 2214 Old Emmorton Road, Bel Air, MD

21015. (410) 569-0795. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a list of holistic veterinarians in your area, or search ahvma.org

BOOKS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of many books on positive training. All available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com

The Holistic Dog Book: Canine Care for the 21st Century, by Denise Flaim, is available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com.

DAYCARE

Robin Bennett, All About Dogs Daycare, Woodbridge, VA. (703) 497-7878; allaboutdogdaycare.com



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