

# Nutrition Lane

by: Deva Khalsa VMD



Let's take a stroll together down Nutrition Lane. We'll take our time so we can thoroughly digest all the information we learn while on our journey. Nutrition is the science that deals with foods and their effect on health. A synonym for nutrition is sustenance and this means something that supports life. Good nutrition both sustains and prolongs life. Once upon a time, Hippocrates said, "Let food be thy medicine." Two thousand years later, scientific research is proving him right!

Perhaps somehow we all innately know this and this may be the reason why diets, for both our dogs and for ourselves, seem to obsess us. We eagerly embrace the latest fad diets and many seem to be based on good sense. Yet there are so many contradictions within the world of nutrition. Several weeks ago I did a survey and the first question I asked was 'What health areas do you worry most about with your dogs or cats?' Most answered, "Making sure they are getting the right nutrition." The next most popular answer was, "Avoiding toxins, chemicals and carcinogens." This means that pet owners are worried about the right things, so far as I'm concerned. If you can get your dog on excellent nutrition, avoid harmful environmental substances, and provide foods that help to remove toxins - you're on the right track.

Though each being is unique, dogs and humans alike have physical bodies that follow nature's designs. How well this physical body machine is maintained will define how healthy your dog remains and how long his life will be. You will better be able to understand that what you feed your dog has an intimate relationship with his health if you understand a bit about how this machine works. Healthful food equals good fuel and fewer toxins mean less clean up for the internal systems. How well all the body parts function will decide how long anyone lives and how disease-free that life will be.

Of course, a vibrant, healthy body affords a better chance of living a long life. Exposure to toxins and carcinogens can thwart this purpose but a healthy dog will always fight off diseases, infections and cancer more doggedly than a compromised dog. Adding help with special foods that flush toxins rapidly out of the body only serves to increase the chances that your dog stays healthy for a longer time.

Your pet's body has trillions of cells in it. These cells are organized into specialized tissues and organs with each cell being a miniature city bustling with traffic. The molecules in cell town are shuttled from place to place in a perpetual rush. The sugars in your dog's food are used for energy, but almost everything else in the realm of nutrition is used to facilitate their life-maintaining metabolic functions.

We tend to focus heavily on the protein, carbohydrate and fat content of our dog's food. While these foods provide energy to the cell and materials for the structure, it's actually the vitamins and minerals that provide the tools which maintain and clean out the cells. A cell can be compared to a microscopic house that is always under construction. The cell continuously re-creates itself and when it can no longer do this, it fashions another cell and bestows on this new cell the same ability.

Each cell is a model of independence. However, the cell is also a member of the family of cells that makes up tissues, which in turn make each organ. The organs interrelate, much like some superbly well-run business and it all runs off nutrition. All cells, tissues and organs are in the business of living, and they need all kinds of building blocks to stay alive. The more nourishing their environment, the better they do.

The word protein comes from the Greek word *proteios*, which means primary. In its infancy, the science of nutrition equated protein with livestock products. This belief has been the status quo for over a hundred years. The rich ate meat and the lower classes ate grains. More animal protein must be good... right? The answer to this is: not necessarily.

In fact, too much protein is proven to increase disease. Diseases of the rich include cancer, diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure, and studies have linked these diseases to high animal protein intake. The animal source protein content of your dog's food does not have to be as high as you have been conditioned to believe. I am not proposing that your dog must become a vegetarian, although many dogs do just fine as vegetarians. You have many choices, and most of us have been conditioned to lean toward too much animal protein. Too often, we top our dog's high protein meals with even more protein in the form of cooked hamburger or chicken.

It's impractical to imagine that the pristine environment that our dogs' ancestors lived in is what exists today. We are all constantly assaulted with toxins, both in the food and the environment, which daily threaten our health. Cancer is the major cause of death in dogs over two years of age. Allergies are prevalent. Chronic diarrhea is a regular occurrence. Organs fail too early. Our dogs' health

is in peril, and this kind of damage does not happen overnight. The modern-day dog needs a correctly balanced diet and carefully chosen plant nutrients to support their cells in their quest for health.

Animal protein is tainted with hormones administered to accelerate growth, in addition to antibiotics and many other chemicals. Our environment is full of xenoestrogens from outdoor lawn and weed products that confuse our pets' immune and hormonal systems. Carcinogens lurk in more areas than can be mentioned at this time, including our spot-on flea products. We desperately need to create diets for our dogs that take all of this into account, and modern science has provided some answers and solutions.

Dogs are not alien creatures from a strange planet who can only eat "special food" from a bag that was only recently, in the time line of living creatures on this planet, invented to supposedly accommodate their dietary needs. Once upon a time, our dogs ate what we ate. Then in the mid 1800's an enterprising fellow by the name of James Spratt noticed stray dogs eagerly consuming moldy hardtack (biscuits) that had been tossed by sailors onto the docks. This observation inspired Spratt to develop the first commercial dog biscuit, Spratt's Patent Meat Dog Cakes. Spratt warned against table scraps, claiming they would break down a dog's digestive powers and make him prematurely old and fat. Of course, Spratt's claims were not backed by nutritional knowledge and I think you've already figured out that his Meat Dog Cakes were composed of 'recycled garbage'.

Almost two hundred years later, most pet owners are still, albeit unknowingly, feeding their dogs 'recycled garbage' and the nutritional needs of our dogs are still little understood. One of the few resources on dog nutrition; the National Research Council publication "Nutrient Requirements of Dogs and Cats" of 2006 is regarded by many as woefully inadequate. On the other hand, progress is being made in human medicine in regard to nutritional requirements. It's time to use all the knowledge we have at hand to discover how we can best feed our pets and respect and support our planet. **DNM**

Since beginning her holistically oriented veterinary practice over 25 years ago, Dr. Khalsa has been incorporating homeopathy, acupuncture, Chinese Herbs, nutritional advice, allergy-elimination techniques such as N.A.E.T and also J.M.T. into her approach. Today her work is a blend of sophisticated holistic techniques and traditional veterinary medicine designed to best enhance the natural strengths and attributes of her patient. Aside from her impressive career and dedication to teaching within the veterinary world, Dr. Khalsa loves sharing her knowledge with the public. She coauthored, 'Healing Your Horse: Alternative Therapies' (Howell Book House, 1993), and most recently authored, 'Dr. Khalsa's Natural Dog' (Kennel Club Books, 2009), a book best described as a 'holistic bible' for dog owners. Dr. Khalsa is a Fellow and Professor of the British Institute of Homeopathy. She has lectured both nationally and internationally.

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