

FEEDING YOUR DOG A RAW DIET

Why a prey model diet and not a BARF diet?

Make sure to look through the [omnivore](#) and [stomach contents](#) myth pages. BARF diets falsely assume dogs are omnivores. Dogs do not need vegetables and fruits, and neither do they need a bunch of supplements. Those are not species appropriate and are simply "safety nets" to make owners feel better about feeding raw. Also, BARF diets advocate feeding 50% bone--this is way too much bone! [Wolves: Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation](#) tells us that the bones and skin of an animal compose no more than 25% of the animal's weight (pg126). In the larger herbivores a wolf brings down, not all of the bones are consummable, which means the percentage of bone a wolf actually receives is less than 25%. BARF diets claim to be correct in an evolutionary context, but evolution and nature clearly demonstrate that wolves are carnivorous animals and that no prey animal that wolves eat is 50% bone and X% veggies (since wolves don't eat stomach contents). A species appropriate raw diet models the prey killed by wolves in the wild, recreating this complete and sufficient diet for our dogs (why feed our dogs as [domesticated wolves](#)?). So take the money spent on supplements and veggies and buy some whole rabbits for your dog. You'll save a lot of time, too. But if you have your heart set on feeding veggies, then feed veggies. Just recognize that your dog has no use for them. If you want to feed veggies and fruits (many dogs and wild canids enjoy the occasional piece of fruit) as occasional treats, then by all means do so, especially if they are useful training treats. The occasional fruit or vegetable isn't going to hurt your dog or throw off its feeding routine.

What do I feed, then?

You can feed just about any prey animal that can run, swim, or fly. For examples of certain raw meaty bone "recipes", please visit [Raw Fed Dogs](#). Here are some suggestions as well as helpful notes:

~Whole Eggs	~Turkey (whole or parts)	~Canned fish
~Beef (any parts, except weight-bearing bones)	~Pork	~Quail
~Liver (any species)	~Lamb	~Pheasant
~Kidney (any species)	~Goat	~Duck
~Green Tripe	~Deer	~Goose
~Heart (any species)	~Elk	~Rats
~Spleen (any species)	~Bison	~Squirrels
~Sweetbreads (any species)	~Ostrich	~Mice
~Lung (any species)	~Kangaroo	~Pronghorn antelope
~Whole rabbits	~Emu	~Moose

~Chicken (whole or parts)

~Whole fish

Some notes: If you are feeding wild game, it is recommended that you check it thoroughly for shot and that you freeze it for at least 24 hours prior to feeding to kill any parasites. If you know your source, however, the freezing isn't always necessary. It is just recommended. Be aware that upland game birds (quail, pheasant, dove, etc.) are all shot with lead shot. If a dog or cat ingests the lead pellets, lead poisoning can occur. So if you feed these animals, check them thoroughly for lead pellets. Wild game is a wonderful addition to any carnivore's diet.

Pacific salmonids carry a toxic parasite that can make dogs very sick. Freeze *fresh* raw salmon, steelhead, trout, and other salmonids for at least 24 hours before feeding to your dog; this thoroughly kills the parasite. Cooked salmon (or canned) is perfectly okay to feed. Fish is the only food that can also be fed cooked, as the bones remain soft and the meat keeps much of its integrity.

When feeding whole fresh fish (especially fish that you just caught from a lake!), it might be worthwhile to cut open the belly and check for hooks swallowed into the stomach as well as hooks in the throat or mouth. If the fish has any sharp spines (like catfish or the dorsal fin on bass), you should cut them off before feeding the fish to the dog. Avoid feeding too much carp, smelt, herring, and catfish, since these fish contain an enzyme that binds Thiamin, or Vitamin B1. They make an excellent addition to any raw diet as long as they aren't the bulk of the diet (i.e. don't feed it every day!).

Wild rodents (squirrels, rats, mice, etc.) can contain numerous parasites and diseases, including tapeworms and the plague (which affects you, not the dog). If you want to feed your pet wild rodents, freeze the rodents for one month or more before feeding. You can get good quality frozen rats and mice from reptile suppliers and other sources. Frozen rabbits can also be shipped from suppliers (check the internet for suppliers).

Avoid feeding the weight-bearing bones of large herbivores--femurs, knuckle bones, etc. These bones can easily break a dog's teeth. These, among chicken necks and wings, are the most complained about bones.

Don't overdo the organ meat! Organs are incredibly nutrient rich and are a **necessary** component of an appropriate raw diet, since these are a vital source of vitamins and minerals for your pets. Too much organ meat can lead to loose stools and a bout with diarrhea (which clears up quickly when the next meal comes through).

I hope you do not feel overwhelmed, although I realize that after years of just measuring out dried pellets and putting them into your dog's bowl, this might seem like a lot of work and things to know. Just take things slowly, and make sure to find a place (like the Yahoo! [raw feeding](#) group) where you can safely ask questions and receive good answers. No one said you had to do this alone! The biggest thing to keep in mind is "prey model". A prey animal has meat, bone, and organ meat. Start here, and then branch out. Don't be discouraged, but take heart in the fact that your pet will be much healthier and happier with a raw diet.

How/in what form do I feed raw meaty bones and whole animals to my pets?

There are many options, and it depends on the size, age, and personal preference of your dog. You must know your dog and select accordingly.

You can feed raw meaty bones and whole carcasses partially frozen, totally frozen, or totally thawed. Some dogs prefer their organ meat frozen as well. Frozen RMBs (raw meaty bones) are good for teething puppies, dogs that are learning to chew their food, and dogs that gulp their food.

Feed the RMBs in as large of a piece as you can. If you have a big dog and you want to feed beef ribs, feed the whole slab of ribs joined together. If you have a little dog and you want to feed a chicken leg, feed the whole thing as a big piece (like a chicken quarter), rather than cutting it into smaller pieces. Small pieces encourage choking and don't let the dog chew. One commonly used standard is to feed something bigger than the dog's head. If the dog doesn't eat all of the food, simply pick up the leftovers, refrigerate or freeze them, and feed it the next day. Or you can let your dog bury the leftovers so it can eat it when the meat is "ripe."

When feeding whole animals, you can feed the ones that are completely feathered and furred, or you could feed skinned ones. It depends on your dog's preference and on its level of expertise (i.e. I wouldn't suggest feeding a dog brand new to raw feeding a whole feathered chicken). When you do feed feathered prey, you might need to pull out the large primary feathers at first so that all is left are the soft feathers that aren't going to poke your dog's mouth, etc. If you are feeding a whole animal, you may need to make a little incision to expose the 'goodies' inside the first time you feed it, as pets don't always recognize it as food. Once your pet realizes it is food, you typically don't need to do that anymore.

When feeding your pet, simply take the meal and hand it to your pet. A dish is not needed unless you want one to put whole eggs or organ meat or canned fish in.

Some people feed a little bit of organ meat every day; some feed a whole meal of organs, and some feed it every few days. The choice is yours. Just remember that organ meat can make a dog's stools loose and that too much liver can result in too much Vitamin A (one of the reasons Cod Liver Oil is not recommended as an Omega 3 supplement). As long as you feed a variety of organs and not just liver day in and day out, your dog will be quite healthy and happy. For a brief list of the nutrients contained in different organs, see Table 4.3 on pg124 in [Wolves: Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation](#). For a more detailed discussion of switching a dog to raw foods, please see [Switching Your Dog to a Raw Diet](#).

Where do I feed my dog?

This can also vary and depends on your personal preferences and local climate. Here are some suggestions.

~Feed your dog in its crate without a crate pad. This makes for easy cleanup, as most dogs clean up the crate themselves, and works well if you have multiple dogs that must be separated from each other.

~Feed outside if the weather allows. You are bound to get some interesting looks from neighbors, but just smile and wave.

~Feed in a corner of the kitchen, garage, or laundry room.

~Feed on a towel in the living room. It is fairly simple to teach the dog to stay on its

towel. If the dog is trained to eat on a towel, then you can have it eat anywhere in the house--just move its towel. Wash the towel as needed, or use more than one towel and rotate. Or, feed on a plastic dropcloth or a plastic-type table cloth, and wipe it down when your dog is done. The prerequisite to all this, of course, is teaching your dog to stay in one spot. Whenever the dog starts edging off the table cloth or towel, simply pick up the raw meaty bone and place it back on the appropriate spot, repositioning the dog as necessary. You can add a phrase like "Stay on your towel" or "Place" or whatever you'd like. After a few times of this, the dog should get the idea that it is supposed to stay on whatever you have it on.

A slick surface can be easily cleaned up by you or your dog. Regular soap and water or white vinegar work well for cleaning and won't contribute to "superbacteria" as much as various antimicrobial or germicidal cleaners will.

When do I feed?

This depends on your schedule and your dog. You can feed in the morning, in the afternoon, or in the evening. Feed whenever you have the time to let your dog spend 10-30 minutes eating its delicious meal of raw meaty bones. Many raw feeders choose the evening as the mealtime for their pets since they are home for work and it is just easiest for them to feed at that time. Choose what works best for you and your dog.

How often do I feed?

Some of this depends on your dog, but here are some general "guidelines". Start off with the suggested schedule here, but make adjustments as necessary. Your dog will tell you/show you what it prefers; for example, if you feed twice a day and it starts refusing a meal, feed only once a day.

For puppies under 4-5 months of age, feed 3 times a day. If your pup consistently refuses one of the meals, move to 2 times a day. If your pup needs 4 meals a day, then feed 4 meals a day.

Dogs over 6 months of age can eat 2 times a day. If your dog indicates that it only needs one meal per day, then switch to one meal per day.

A dog can be moved to one meal per day a) when it tells you it is ready, or b) after it has finished its period of rapid growth (usually around one year), or c) never. Some dogs do much better on two meals a day, and some prefer one meal a day. Let your dog dictate how often you feed it. Many raw feeders generally feed one meal a day so that the dog can get as big of a raw meaty bone as possible, but all follow the rule of thumb--KNOW YOUR DOG! Their dogs told/showed them that they preferred or did better on one meal. A dog that is out of puppyhood and over one year of age can safely be fasted for a day as long as more food is fed on the other days to make up for that day without food. Fasting is implemented by many raw feeders with great results, and mimics a condition seen commonly in wild canids. Fasting is known to have wonderful benefits in cleansing and toning the body while helping the dog lay down muscle, not fat. The fast also allows raw feeders to feed bigger raw meaty bones on the other days and gives the digestive system a "break".

One technique commonly used with fasting is called the "Gorge and Fast" technique. The dog receives a large meal the night before the fast, and then fasts the entire next day. Some people give a light breakfast the morning after the fast, while others just wait until

evening to feed the dog its full meal. Some feeders incorporate this technique even further by having several fasts per week, each preceded by a gorge night (where the dog may eat something like a whole chicken or a whole turkey or half a goat in one sitting). This mimics a more natural way of eating and allows the dog to actually eat until it is full, allowing the stomach and intestines to fully function as they were designed to. Regardless of what method you choose, once the dog is old enough/ready, at least one day of fasting should be incorporated. Often the dog will dictate this for you, particularly if it has had a large meal the day before. If your dog eats sporadically--heartily one day, then picking at food the next--incorporate a fast day on the day your dog would usually be picking at its food. Also keep in mind that canids are incredible fasters and can go for weeks without food (Wolves: Behavior, Ecology, and Conservation).

How much do I feed?

This will also vary with your dog. A dog that is more active and has a higher metabolism will eat more, while a less active dog or one with a slower metabolism will eat less. Puppies will typically eat more than adults, since they need to fuel their rapidly growing body.

The recommended food amount is 2-3% of your dog's desired body weight per day. So for a 100lb dog, you will be feeding 2-3 pounds of food a day. If you are gorging and fasting, you may be feeding 6 pounds or more on a gorge day. A highly active dog may need closer to 3%, while a dog with slower metabolism may need closer to 2%. How do you know if your dog is too fat or thin? You should be able to easily feel your dog's ribs and even see the outline of the last few floating ribs at the end of the ribcage that attaches to the vertebrae of the spine closest to the hips. You shouldn't be able to see ALL the ribs, or the hip bones, or the vertebrae of the spine, just the outline of the last few floating ribs. If you stand above your dog, he should have a definite waist between his hips and ribcage. Remember that dogs are built differently from each other, so some may have a naturally stocky body that won't give you a waist no matter what you do. Know your dog! For a puppy, feed 2-3% of his expected adult body weight per day. Puppies under 4 months of age are very good at self-regulating their food intake, and can be given the opportunity to eat at a carcass or raw meaty bone until they are full at each meal. Pick up the leftovers and feed them later. If the puppy starts gorging himself to the point he has a huge, swollen, distended belly, or if he is getting fat, regulate his portions at 2-3% of his adult body weight per day. If the pup is looking very skinny and isn't putting on weight, get a fecal sample done to make sure he doesn't have worms, and then up his food intake if needed. Keep in mind that puppies grow at a slower, more regulated rate on raw food than on commercial foods. This translates to less chance of developing the bone and joint problems seen in puppies fed commercial foods. Don't force feed your pup in an effort to make it grow faster or bigger.

For an overweight dog: determine the desired body weight and then feed 2-3% of that ideal body weight per day. For an underweight dog: determine the desired body weight and feed 2-3% of that desired weight per day. For maintenance: feed 2-3% of the dog's current body weight per day and adjust the food amount as needed.

Where can I get meat?

There are many different places to obtain meat; it definitely helps to be creative. The Yahoo! [Carnivore Feed Supplier](#) list is also a good way to find suppliers in your area. Here is just a sampling of places from which to get meat:

Local cooperative (co-ops)	Ethnic markets
Butchers	Rabbit/Chicken/Goat Breeders
Local markets or supermarkets	Hunters
Meat purveyors	Ranchers (cattle, pig, goat, lamb, etc.)

You can search on the internet for businesses or farms that ship meat directly to you. Two examples of many would be Hare Today and Riveriene Farm. There are also numerous reptile supply places that have mice, rats, and rabbits as well. My only advice is to make sure your pet likes rabbit, mouse, rat, or whatever you want to order before you actually place a big order; perhaps place a small order first and see if you and your pets like their products and service.

To keep down the costs, it is recommended that you buy in bulk and stock up for a month at a time if possible. If not, no worries. Keep an eye out for sales in the meat department and stock up when you can. Check with local restaurants, stores, or butchers to see if they will consider ordering you a case of whatever you need (at 'restaurant price' or a bulk price) the next time they place an order with their supplier. While not necessary, a separate freezer for raw meaty bones can be a worthwhile investment.

What about hormones and such in meat?

If one is concerned about this, then consider feeding free-range, organic meat whenever possible. This can be pricey, but you may be able to get good deals from markets or seasonal deals from the producers/suppliers themselves. Check out the Yahoo! [Carnivore Feed Supplier](#) list as well. If you are just shopping in the supermarket, here are some tips:

- Avoid meat that has unusually red coloring and says 'color added'. Check the label for tiny print that states coloring was added. The chemicals that give the meat its red coloring can bind up valuable nutrients like vitamin B and make them less accessible to your pet. However, the good intestinal flora in your pet's intestines help synthesize vitamin B, so if you feed color-added meat occasionally--as part of a varied diet--it isn't a huge deal. Make do with what meats you have available, even if it includes the occasional color-added meat.
- Check packages of chicken pieces, etc. carefully for anything that says 'salt and sugar added', 'flavoring added', 'preserved with _____.' Avoid meats that have added flavoring (hickory, barbecue, mesquite, lemon, whatever). If one is worried about salt and sugar added to the meat, soak the meat for a short while in water before feeding. Do not soak for too long, however, because you do not

want to leach the nutrients out of the meat. Alternatively, feed it to your dog as is and make sure your pet has access to fresh water at all times.

If hormones and additives do not bother you in your selection of meat, then don't worry about it. If you are concerned, then look for free-range, grass-fed, or organic meats at a good price. Or stay away from supermarkets and order directly from butchers, co-ops, and ranchers.

Raw feeding is as expensive as you want to make it. If you can only afford Wal-Mart chicken quarters, then feed what you can afford. Any fresh, raw food will bring about positive, healthy changes in your pet. If you can buy grass-fed, organically grown meat, then feed that to your dog. Regardless of what you feed, make sure you feed a variety of meats (including fish and eggs) and raw meaty bones and organs. If you can get whole carcasses, then great. If not, just do your best to approximate a whole carcass by assembling "Franken-prey"--a little of this meat, some of this organ, these RMBs, etc.

What about supplements?

Supplements are few and far between. There is no need to be adding multivitamins, or kelp-alfalfa powder, or algae and spirulina, etc. You can if you want, but if you are feeding a varied prey-model diet, it is a simple waste of money (and you run the risk of oversupplementation of certain vitamins and minerals, which in turn bind up other necessary minerals, etc.). It is HIGHLY recommended that you just stick to the food before adding any sort of supplement or vitamin--no 'just in case' supplements.

There is one supplement that many raw feeders use: Fish Body Oil. This is used to supplement Omega-3 fatty acids lacking in grain-fed, domestic meats (grass-fed, free-range meats have an appropriate Omega-6:Omega-3 ratio). We do NOT use Cod Liver Oil (CLO), because CLO is high in vitamins A and D, and too much of these can cause problems.

Fish Body Oil (FBO) can be obtained at any vitamin shop or section in the supermarket. Search for cold water marine fish-derived FBO, since this is the best. A large dog can easily receive two 1000mg capsules per day, although you may want to start with one to see how your dog responds. Sometimes one capsule is all that is needed. FBO can be given every day, every few days, once a week, or as needed depending on your dog and the weather (drier times of the year mean drier skin). FBO helps keep the skin oils balanced and keeps skin soft and supple. While the raw diet does this anyway, the balance of Omega-6 and Omega-3 fatty acids obtained by giving FBO capsules is beneficial.

If you don't want to supplement with FBO, then it is suggested that you feed fish regularly.

Another common supplement is glucosamine and chondroitin, given to dogs with arthritis and joint problems. However, many raw feeders find that their aging pets do much better on raw food and no longer have a need for supplemental glucosamine. Allow older dogs or dogs with joint problems time to adjust to the raw diet (approximately one month, more or less) before adding or taking away glucosamine/chondroitin supplementation.

What do I use for treats?

You can feed a variety of treats--store-bought or home-made. Try to steer clear of grain-based treats, however, since even small amounts of grain can cause adverse effects (itching, etc.) in a grain-sensitive pet.

Freeze dried liver treats are great; just don't overdo them or your dog may have runny stools. If you are feeding a lot of liver treats (freeze-dried or otherwise), try to feed organs other than liver during meals.

Other treat choices are hot dog pieces, cubed cheese, peanut butter or yogurt drops, pieces of dried meat, or pieces of fruits and veggies. Yes, fruits and veggies--a small amount for treats isn't going to bother the dog at all. Just remember they come out the other end in the same form they entered.

Commercial liver treats, chicken treats, meat treats, etc. are good as long as they don't have a whole lot of grain and preservatives (although some people feel that the minimal amount of preservatives and grains in these treats are negligible; it's a personal choice).

Beef heart can be dried, and makes excellent treats. You can dry your own liver treats, or beef heart treats, or chicken treats, etc. Here's how:

- Cut desired meat into thin slices approximately 1/4 inch thick. They can be rectangular or square or triangular--whatever you desire.
- If you do not have a dehydrator, then place the meat in the oven on a) a foil-lined baking sheet, or b) a cookie cooling rack on top of a foil-lined baking sheet, or c) the top slatted portion of a broiler pan with the bottom tray on the rack beneath, or d) the oven racks with a foil-lined pan beneath it to catch drips.
- Set oven on 'warm' or on the lowest setting available (sometimes the pilot light will do). Keep the door cracked open! If the door doesn't stay cracked on its own, use a wooden spoon to prop the door open.
- Let the heat circulate the air to dry the meat pieces. Drying time depends on the meat, the size of the pieces, and the humidity.
- When done, the pieces should be like jerky, but still 'bendy'. Let the pieces cool and then store them in an airtight container in the fridge. Moisture in the

container indicates some pieces may have not been done (unless you put warm treats directly into the fridge; moisture condenses on the lid when that happens, too.). Treats can be stored in the fridge for one to three months.

Dried fish skins also make a wonderfully chewy treat.

The bottom line is: know your dog, its tastes, and what works best with it. If your dog will do back flips for pieces of carrots, then great! Use what works.

What about recreational bones?

Recreational bones, or rec bones, are bones for good chewing that don't get consumed.

When people think of rec bones, they think of precisely the wrong bone to feed: long marrow bones, cow femurs, or knuckle bones. These bones are very dense and hard, and can easily chip or break a dog's teeth.

A rec bone can be anything your dog cannot consume entirely. For some dogs this might be a beef rib or two, or a beef neck bone. Stay away from the heavy, dense bones. You want a bone that isn't incredibly dense but will still wear down slowly. What bone you select depends on your dog's chewing abilities.

There are alternatives to rec bones. Bully sticks, also known as macho sticks, are excellent chewy treats made from dried bull penises. Dried muscle meat can be a good recreational chew, although they are generally only available in sizes suitable for smaller dogs. A Kong stuffed with ground or cubed meat and frozen is another excellent treat option, and is one of the only times you should feed ground raw.

Do, however, stay away from rawhides and other synthetic chews. These contain preservatives and other unhealthy things for your dog. Rawhides are not completely digestible and can cause stomach upset and gas. Pieces of rawhide swell in a dog's stomach, and can also pose a choking hazard by swelling in the throat. Synthetic chews made from 'natural' ingredients can often contain inappropriate things for your pet like grains, milk, and chemical additives. Additionally, they are often highly processed and are too hard on a dog's teeth (they usually say "bone hard" but are WAY harder than any raw bone save cow femurs). Others can be bitten off in chunks and swallowed; this may not be a problem except for the fact that they may not be very digestible.

When thinking of recreational bones, think 'raw' or 'dried meat', think 'still meaty', think 'real food', and think 'not big marrow bones'.

***Outrageous Shadow Filas does not endorse the feeding of a raw diet to the Fila. It has been our experience that most dogs do not maintain a complete balance of the vitamins, minerals, and enzymes needed for optimal health.