

Feeding Your Dog

Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society | September 2014

Your dog's eating habits are as important for his health as the foods you give him to eat.

There are simple but important rules for feeding your dog, some of which you may consider for yourself. Remember: being a good dog owner takes work, and his feeding may require more attention than you think. 'Feeding' is not always keeping his food bowl topped up – although this is a safe and necessary reality at times. It involves everything from cleanliness, water supply, to food selection. Get to know his eating habits including the amount he is normally eating so you can keep his food and bowl fresh and clean, respectively. This advice isn't meant to institute regimented ownership, just try to get a bit more in tune with him. Once established, you won't even notice.

1. Make sure that you feed your dog at regular times.

It's important that he knows when he will eat so that he isn't anxious or hungry between meals. Regular meal times also help stop him begging for food outside those times.

2. Treat his dish like you treat yours – with the expectation of clean.

Your dog's feeding bowls should always be thoroughly washed and disinfected after each use as dried or stale remains can carry infections or harbor bacteria. Once the bowls are washed it is a good idea to clear them away, too. Next time you need to buy a new feeding dish, buy 5, so you can set up some sort of washing routine so it always happens – like your own dishes.

3. Give him access to a constant supply (always there) of clean water.

It is vital that your dog has free access to a constant supply of fresh, clean drinking water at all times. His water bowl may need not only refilling but cleaning out several times during the day. **Do not govern his water intake with your assumptions of health or his thirst, especially if you are not in perfect health.** Always have his bowl full of clean water. If you return from a walk or exercise with him, keep filling his bowl if he keeps finishing the water, especially if in the heat of summer.

4. Never feed scraps to your dog – especially food you wouldn't eat.

His dietary needs are not the same as yours. He should always be given a properly balanced diet suitable for dogs. Be sure his food has a moist component to it at times, and be in tune with him – when he needs to go for a walk be sure to take him. If you are feeding him from a can, it is important to read the nutritional information on the label and ensure that you supplement your dog's diet as necessary.

5. Get him to enjoy his eating more with an 'anti-gorge bowl.'

Some dogs tend to eat too fast. This is an instinct of wild behavior. In a wild pack, each dog has to fight for his share and so he will eat as quickly as possible to stop his food being stolen. However, a domestic dog can suffer from indigestion, wind and vomiting if he eats too fast. An excellent and economical solution is to get an 'anti-gorge bowl'. This type of bowl has an uneven inside surface. As your dog has to eat around the protrusions in the bowl it takes him longer to get to all his food. Most dogs seem to enjoy the little bit of extra work they need to do to obtain their food this way.

6. Get him his exercise.

There are dog breeds that are well known to be at risk of obesity. Basset Hounds, Labradors and King Charles Spaniels are common breeds that can have issues with weight. Whatever your dog's breed, you should take care to make sure that his feeding regime is balanced with plenty of outside exercise.

7. Watch his weight.

A dog that is too thin will have a drawn in tummy, a thin face and ribs that can be seen or felt under the hand. An obese dog will have a distended tummy, folds of fat on the back of the neck, no tuck towards the back legs and ribs covered completely. A healthy dog will have shiny fur with a muscular body and show a slight tuck at the waist.

Get him checked out by a vet if you are unsure about his weight. This is especially important if you know that you are doing everything right but he is still either overweight or underweight.

Your extra work in this feeding area will result in a happy, healthy dog – and your ultimate reward, a better friend.

About Dogs with Wings:

Dogs with Wings is a leader in the international community of assistance dog training schools. The organization exists to serve people with disabilities. They work collaboratively, and in partnership with other organizations that provide assistance dogs to people with disabilities.

Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society | 780.944.8011 | Edmonton, Alberta

Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society | 587.284.3647 | Calgary, Alberta

© Copyright Dogs with Wings Assistance Dog Society | All rights reserved.