

Pet Corner

Human Foods Pets Can Eat

By Jacquie Pipkin

Last month's column itemized human foods that are unhealthy, even poisonous, for dogs and cats. Let's now take a look at human foods that are healthy for pets. This article is a compilation of recommendations received from *The Whole Dog Journal* as well as from Web sites such as pawning.com, petdoc.com and modern-dogmagazine.com. The following are healthy treat and snack choices to be offered as part of a balanced diet. Keep in mind that treats and snacks should not total more than 10 percent of your pet's recommended daily caloric intake. The key word for including human food as part of your pet's diet is moderation.

- Watermelon, cantaloupe and honeydew are all healthy snack options. I once had a cat that so loved cantaloupe that she would meow and beg before I even cut the fruit open. Offering some of the more exotic melons should not be done without first checking animal poison control.

- Peanut butter does not appear to cause allergies in dogs. It's a wonderful way to disguise medications.

- Berries are good for dogs for the same reason they are good for humans. They contain antioxidants. Frozen berries can serve as a special summertime treat.

- Of course, dogs and cats will eat chicken anyway they can get or steal it. Barbequed, baked, boiled, broiled or grilled is fine but never raw and never with bones. Other lean meats such as hamburger and pork are also fine. Remember no onions, garlic or salt seasonings.

- Cheese (low or reduced fat) is a safe snack for cats and dogs, if they are not lactose intolerant. You'll need to monitor your pet's reaction. Often I mix a dollop of cottage cheese or low-fat plain yogurt with kibble to perk up a finicky eater's appetite.

- Bananas, peeled apples (no seeds) and oranges (no rinds) are as nutritional for your pets as they are for you.

- Green beans and carrots are low in calories and a good alternative to dog biscuits for filling up a Kong. You can be more generous with fruits and vegetables than you can with other human and pet snack options. Carrots have the added advantage of being good for your dog's teeth. In my house, the dogs do not begin eating until I have placed a few raw carrot slices on top of their dinners. Pumpkin (no seeds) and sweet potatoes also contain important vitamins and are an excellent source of fiber.

- Cooked eggs are a great source of digestive protein.

- Rice with some chicken broth offers a bland, easily digestible meal for older dogs or when your dog has an upset stomach. Brown rice has fewer calories and less fat than white rice.

- Parsley is said to improve dogs' breath. It doesn't hurt to mix a little in with wet or dry food. Parsley, like other greens and vegetables is a good source of calcium and potassium.

A growing number of pet owners are opting for completely homemade human diets for their pets. If you choose this alternative, it needs to be nutritionally balanced. To ensure nutritional balance, follow the latest guidelines established by the National Research Council (NRC). Table scraps are not considered a nutritionally balanced diet, and if overdone, you may find Fido begging at the table, refusing to eat his own food and putting on weight.

In the latest edition of *The Whole Dog Journal*, Mary Strauss reviews three books, which she recommends "without reservation." All include recipes and adhere to established NRC guidelines: *Dr. Becker's Real Food for Healthy Dogs and Cats*; *Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet: Healthier Dog Food the ABC Way* by Steve Brown; and *K-9 Kitchen, Your Dog's Diet: The Truth Behind the Hype* by Monica Segal.

Before making any major changes to your pets' diets, check with your veterinarian, especially if they are on any medications. Some medications react badly with some nutrients. Upsetting your dog's or cat's vitamin and mineral balances can have serious health consequences.

Also, don't forget to include a healthy dose of exercise as part of your pet's daily routine. Offering your pet a balanced diet coupled with daily exercise is the best way to maintain the health and prolong the life of this valued family member.

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PKS Easter Egg Hunt

There will be an Easter egg hunt on Saturday April 23 at 10 a.m. at Garner Park. Children 12 and under.

(All Welcome)

If you would like to donate candy for the plastic eggs please drop off at town hall or call Jill Cross at 631-905-6788 or Missy Klor at 727-5567.