

# Feeding Guide for Puppies

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## Contents of this chapter:

<a href="#">What a parent wolf would do</a>	94
<a href="#">A serious challenge for a serious puppy owner...</a>	95
<a href="#">The overall frame of a meaningful feeding plan</a>	97
<a href="#">"Puppy Supplement"</a>	98
<a href="#">"Energy Supplement"</a>	100
<a href="#">"Full meal"</a>	101
<a href="#">Feeding schedule for your carnivore-to-be</a>	102
<a href="#">How much to feed a growing puppy</a>	103
<a href="#">Feeding procedure and protocol in your pack hierarchy</a>	105
<a href="#">Your ultimate reference for obtaining the goal</a>	107

Congratulations with your new puppy - and congratulations with your decision to follow the breeder's advice regarding feeding it a healthy, natural diet!

If you breeder did not advise you to feed naturally, then congratulations with your decision to do better!

From your breeder, you might have got recommendations about what kind of food to feed your puppy. You might even have received a supply for a few days. Using such food can be a good thing to do - for a few days, even if it is not natural. The reason is only that your puppy experiences a lot of stress in the change of environment you expose it to, so you don't want to add more stress than necessary. However, the puppy will adjust to its new circumstances in less than three days, so you do not need to continue an unnatural diet for any longer than that.

Be aware, though, that when you change the diet for the puppy, it most probably will get diarrhea. That is *not* to worry about! (Please see ["Checking Stool"](#) for more details on this.)

Also, if you can recommend your breeder to others for his/her natural rearing of puppies, please take a few minutes to have this breeder added to my directory of naturally rearing breeders at

<http://k9joy.com/education/breeders.html>. Thank you!

## **What a parent wolf would do...**

When puppies are born in a wolf pack, there are being taken care of by the entire pack. First and foremost the mother, but, in case something should happen to her, other bitches are ready to step in - their natural "false" pregnancy will make them capable of supplying milk to the puppies!

The first 3-4 weeks, the puppy will live exclusively on milk from its mother or another wolf. If you breed puppies, you get the mother to take care of this, and you do nothing to discourage the breast-feeding. Through the milk, the puppies get not only all the nourishment they need, they also get immune protection in the form of antibodies to all the diseases the mother fought successfully. (Be aware that puppies do not have a fully functional immune system. They depend on the immunity from the mother milk, so any kind of vaccination will do nothing but reducing the immune defence they already have. Not until after they are naturally weaned, will their immune system respond to vaccination as intended!)

As soon as the puppies can walk around, they will start chewing on the leftovers from the food the adult wolves carried home. This will give them a gradual taste for "real food". It will typically happen when they are 4-5 weeks old, but the mother milk will still constitute the most important food source until they are 7-8 weeks of age. Even after then, they will normally continue getting at least a daily snack suck from their mother till they are about 12 weeks old, and sometimes even longer.

To support the transition, all the adult wolves will participate in a natural "puppy feeding program" that involves regurgitation of their own food. When reaching 6-7 weeks of age, the puppies will start begging for food from the adults, triggering their regurgitation of half-digested raw food.

This feeding program will generally become the puppies' main way of getting food till they are about 12 weeks old, and it will often continue till the puppies are about 16-20 weeks old, along with them starting to take "real food" seriously.

After 16-20 weeks of age, they are on "real food" only, getting their share of the kill brought home by the pack. This will be about the time when they get all their permanent teeth.

All nicely co-ordinated...

[Back to start of this section](#)

[Back to start of this chapter](#)

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## **A serious challenge for a serious puppy owner...**

First of all, you will probably not have access to mother milk.

And you might not have an adult dog around that will feed your puppy pre-digested food.

How do you find a complete and balanced substitute for the mother's milk and for the regurgitated food from the adult pack members?

It is impossible. But we can try to come reasonably close to at least some of the major features.

In the period 8-12 weeks of age, the puppy will not be very good at digesting raw natural food, as you would feed it to an adult dog. Your puppy might eat it, but its ability to extract all the nutrients from it will not be fully developed.

This leads to a risk of malnourishing the puppy....

Next, we should recognise that puppies in nature will still eat "real food" from they are 6-7 weeks old. They just cannot digest it all too well, so many of the nutrients do not get utilised fully. It takes a lot of energy for a puppy stomach to digest "real food", so we should feed this to it in the evening, so the puppy can rest during the night, digesting.

Lack of the pre-digested food is a major challenge. We cannot really provide any effective substitute for the puppy. We can, however, do several things that will help the digestion process to some degree:

1. We can make a ground mush out of the food. This will give the puppy's enzymes the biggest possible surface to attack, and will make digestion easier. Hurrah for the food processor!
2. We can serve some parts of the food well cooked! Cooking (=boiling) will destroy many nutrients in meat, but it will also break many of the bigger protein molecules into smaller ones that are easier to deal with for the puppy stomach. And it will for sure destroy some of the indigestible fibre structure of especially plant cells, so the contents of those cells become available for the stomach enzymes. This makes cooked vegetables, pureed to a mush together with some cooked meat, a possibility of merit, at least for some part of the diet. Besides, this will at least also *look* like regurgitated food...! (Sorry, bad joke...)

**Excerpt from Mogens Eliassen's book:  
"Raw Food For Dogs - the Ultimate Guide for Dog Owners"**

3. We can serve soaked grain. Although grain products are very low on the list of natural ingredients, they do have some of the same advantages as the mother's milk: they are easy to digest, and they provide a fast source of energy without putting too much stress on the digestion process.
4. We can serve products that were meant to feed other growing animals. Milk tops the list, but is generally very much depleted from its nutrients when it reaches the grocery stores. Other dairy products are of value too, although limited. But eggs are great, particularly the yolk that was meant to feed a chicken from conception to hatching.

Please notice that we cannot choose just one of these options. None of them are perfect, so your puppy will get malnourished if you simply pick the one *you* like the best....

However, if you combine them all, you have a much greater chance of supplying what the puppy needs, without stressing its digestive system too much. It is a transition period. From mother milk exclusively, to raw food exclusively.

The mother milk was the only food supply for start. In the period 6-12 weeks, it gradually gets less and less important, and by week 16, it is no longer on the menu.

Regurgitated food takes over in that same period, and, as the puppy approaches puberty, it will join the hunting and get its share of the kill directly. Thus, the importance of the regurgitated food lies in the early part of the period.

Throughout the transition period, the puppies will be exposed to "real food" carried home by the adult pack members, and they will certainly give it a good try!

On one side, you want to give the puppy some food that is as easy to digest as the mother milk. Although you cannot fully substitute the mother milk, you can, in terms of nutrition and access to energy, come fairly close.

The bad news is that those products will for sure not constitute a complete and well-balanced diet for your puppy.

So, on the other side, you must get the puppy's stomach *trained*, as quickly as possible, to digest a "real" meal of raw food. The only way of doing this is by giving it "real" meals of raw food - and nothing else - regardless the

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puppy's insufficiently developed ability to handle it. If you serve it anyway, the puppy will develop the ability, probably in just a few weeks.

The simplest and most effective way of accomplishing all this is by feeding some meals as "mother milk replacement meals", some meals as "pre-digested meals", and some meals as "fully adult, raw food meals". Don't mix them! Any meal is either one or the other.

In the following sections, you will find an overview of how you can prepare the meals. You should vary the ingredients as much as you can and use the recipes only as a rough guideline. Don't take them for an oracle! They are not perfect, but they do constitute a very workable solution that has raised many thousands of very healthy puppies. When you understand *why* they are made the way they are, you can easily make your own variations, adapting to what *you* have available. After all, that's what a wolf would do too....

Summing up, you feed your puppy three different types of meals:

- A "pre-digested food replacement meal";
- A "mother milk replacement meal";
- A "real raw food meal".

Your feeding plan is to let the "mother milk replacement meal" disappear first (no later than at 5 months of age), the "pre-digested food replacement meal" next, so that your puppy, no later than at 10 months of age, is left with only the "real meal" per day. Most puppies will allow you to go much quicker on this, and that is just great - we will return to that when we discuss [how much to feed](#).

[Back to start of this section](#)

[Back to start of this chapter](#)

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

## **The overall frame of a meaningful feeding plan**

For start, you should offer the puppy **three meals per day**:

- morning (["Puppy Supplement"](#) - pre-digested food replacement meal);
- afternoon (["Energy Supplement"](#) - mother milk replacement meal);
- evening (["Full Meal"](#) - real raw food meal).

*(To be continued)*