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Shifting to the ultimate carnivore feeding schedule...

Once you comprehend that your carnivore companion, the domesticated wolf you have in your family, needs to ingest its food on some completely different terms than the two-legged primates in your family, the question is, how you manage the transition.

What is the risk?

Coming from a situation where your dog is used to getting two meals a day, shifting "cold turkey" to only 3-4 meals/week will quadruple the size of each meal.

The dog's stomach is an elastic muscle that folds nicely together, almost like an accordion, when not in use. When filled, it stretches like a rubber band, and the muscles around the lining will "massage" the food to ensure a good mix with the digestive enzymes that are produced by the stomach lining and the pancreas.

If you have been running such an organ at 25% of its capacity for years, it will no longer have that capacity. It is like any other muscle: if you don't use it, it will lose its strength. Just think of a skier that broke his leg several months ago and now finally got the cast off. If he starts doing heavy slalom skiing same day, he is doomed to break a few more bones quite quickly...

The biggest risk for your dog in this situation is bloat ("turned stomach"). Although the reasons for bloat are very poorly understood, then it remains a fact from my personal experience that dogs that suddenly fill their stomach with more than 6% of their body weight, after *never* having had a chance to do so before, do run a serious risk of bloat. Other factors might contribute also, but bloat is a serious condition worth preventing.

Prevention is simple. You train the dog's stomach muscle slowly to handle the greater challenge. A good time frame would be 3 months.

The good news is that when you do the transition gradually like this, you are totally safe from bloat. And better yet: I have seen many hundreds of dog being fed full meals just 3-4 times/week for many decades – and never (NEVER!) heard of one single case of bloat among those dogs...

The specific transition procedure

It is really simple: you stick with the same amount of food *per week*.

Typically, dogs need about 2% of their body weight in food, average, per day. That makes 14% per week. For your dog, just do the math. Multiply your dog's weight

by 14 and divide by 100 – and you have the amount of food it needs per week. Raw, natural food, that is – there is no way you should do this on a non-natural diet!

Let's say your dog weights in at 55 pounds. The amount of food then becomes

$$55 \text{ pounds} * 14/100 = 7.7 \text{ pounds.}$$

This means that you feed 7.5-8.0 pounds per week – you do not need to be more precise about it. Just don't change that parameter!

Now, if you currently feed twice daily, each meal, in average, will be

$$7.7 \text{ pounds}/7/2 = 0.55 \text{ pounds}$$

But you now have a goal: getting 14 meals per week cut down to 3 meals per week.

First step is getting down to 10 meals/week. This will make each meal contain

$$7.7 \text{ pounds}/10 = 0.77 \text{ pounds.}$$

You now distribute those 10 meals over the week as it fits into your schedule. Try to spread them fairly evenly, so you feed two meals (morning and evening) one day and then only one meal (lunch) the next day. Be sloppy about your timing! In order to avoid complications with vomiting bile, you must never feed at a time when the dog expects it! When the dog has no expectation of food, you may call it, do a little training session – and serve the food as reward!

From ten meals, you go down to 7 – that is one meal per day. You do this after a couple of weeks on 10 meals/week. With 7 meals per week, each meal now is

$$7.7 \text{ pounds}/7 = 1.1 \text{ pounds.}$$

You stay at this level for a couple of weeks. You keep up with your unpredictability and time confusion – not a single meal will be fed when the dog expects it or asks for it. You prepare the food and put it away. You take the dog away from the food and let it forget it. An hour or so later, you call the dog and start a training session. You plan your training session so it ends up where you stored the food, and you continue training, even though the dog knows that the food is there! When you get a very good training result, with the dog ignoring the food, you end the training and reward the dog with the food!

From here, it is simple. You decrease the number of meals per week by one every second week. Starting with 6 meals per week, you feed your 7.7 pounds divided by 6 at every meal, or 1.3 pounds. A week has $7 * 24 \text{ hours} = 168 \text{ hours}$. And, in average, you separate the meals by $168 \text{ hours}/6 = 28 \text{ hours}$.

Two weeks later, you cut out another weekly meal and now serve $7.7 \text{ pounds}/5 = 1.5 \text{ pound per meal}$ – and you split the meals with $168 \text{ hours}/5 = 34 \text{ hours}$.

After another two weeks, you cut down to 4 meals per week. Same math.

The final step is now increasing the meal size to what the dog wants to eat! Many dogs will already be there when you reach 4 meals/week, but, for some dogs, you simply continue the process and get down to 3 meals per week. The meal size then becomes $7.7 \text{ pounds}/3 = 2.6 \text{ pounds per meal}$ – and the meals are in average $168 \text{ hours}/3 = 56 \text{ hours}$ apart. Now that is about 5 times as much as those measly teaser meals it got before you started on this!

If your dog is bigger or smaller than 55 pounds, your amount of food will be adjusted accordingly. The main thing is that you keep the weekly amount of food fixed as a constant.

The good news is that you do not have to be overly precise, neither with the amounts nor with the times. Mother Nature has never weighed a prey animal prior to the kill when "serving it" in a successful hunt for a wolf... You should do your math with *at least $\pm 20\%$ error!* So, when the plan says that next meal should be 28 hours ahead, then those 28 hours can and should be anything from 22 hours to 34 hours! Totally unpredictable for the dog! You can be off with a full night's sleep and still be "right on time"! And even if your plan says 28 hours and you make it 20 one day - or 36 - Mother Nature will certainly not hold you accountable. So, there went your possible excuse for not being able to fit this into your busy schedule.... :-)

Same thing with the amounts. Plus or minus 20% - the "scale" you use is your hand and your eyes! Anything more precise than that is NOT serving the purpose, as far as the individual meals goes. So, 2 pounds is the same as 2.4 pounds! And it is also the same as 1.6 pounds. But 2 pounds and 2.6 pounds are slightly different...

For the weekly totals, you can be stricter, if you like - but it will regulate itself, as you get through the transition.

Now, as indicated earlier, once the dogs adjust to this new feeding regime, they will decrease their total intake of food a bit - and that's just fine.

And did you see how elegantly this approach totally eliminates the concept of "fasting"? There are *no fast days* here - there is only "time between meals".

Final comments

Once you get the hang of this feeding regime, you will start to see the benefits - and you will enjoy your freedom to not have to worry about details of your feeding!

Most dogs (some 95% in my observation) will automatically adjust their food intake and reach an ideal healthy weight. Very few will need some additional help from the owner. But that help is very simple and easy to give; if the dog gains weight, you cut down a few meals. Maybe not every week - but you reduce the number of meal - not the sizes of the meals! If the dog loses weight, you kick in an extra meal now and then.

If you like to see your dog happy and content, you will love this....

Mogens Eliassen

Mogens Eliassen holds a Ph.D. level degree in Chemistry from Århus University, Denmark and has 30+ years of experience working with dogs, dog owners, dog trainers, and holistic veterinarians as a coach, lecturer, and education system developer. He publishes a free newsletter "[The Peeing Post](#)" containing lots of tips and advice on dog problems of all kinds, particularly about training, behavioral problems, feeding, and health care.

For more information about Mogens Eliassen, including links to other articles he has published, please send a short e-mail to contact@k9joy.com.