

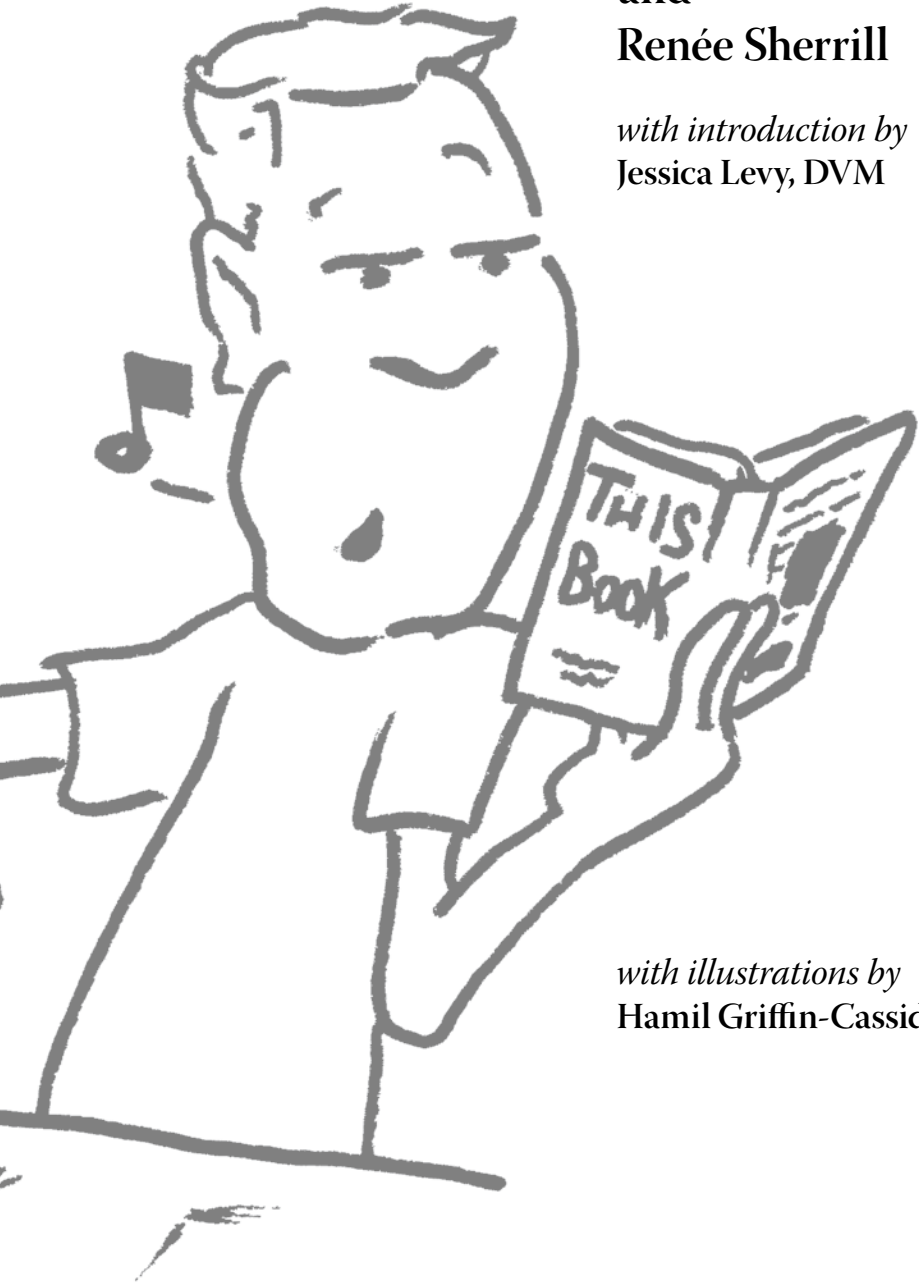
# Simple Cooking for Dogs 101

**Straight Talk About Dog Food,  
Nutrition, Supplements, Behaviors,  
and much more...**



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\*Recipes with an asterisk are vegetarian meals. Also see the Food Substitutions section on page 25 for tips on how to adapt any recipe in this book.



# What Every Pet Owner Should Know

BY JESSICA LEVY, DVM

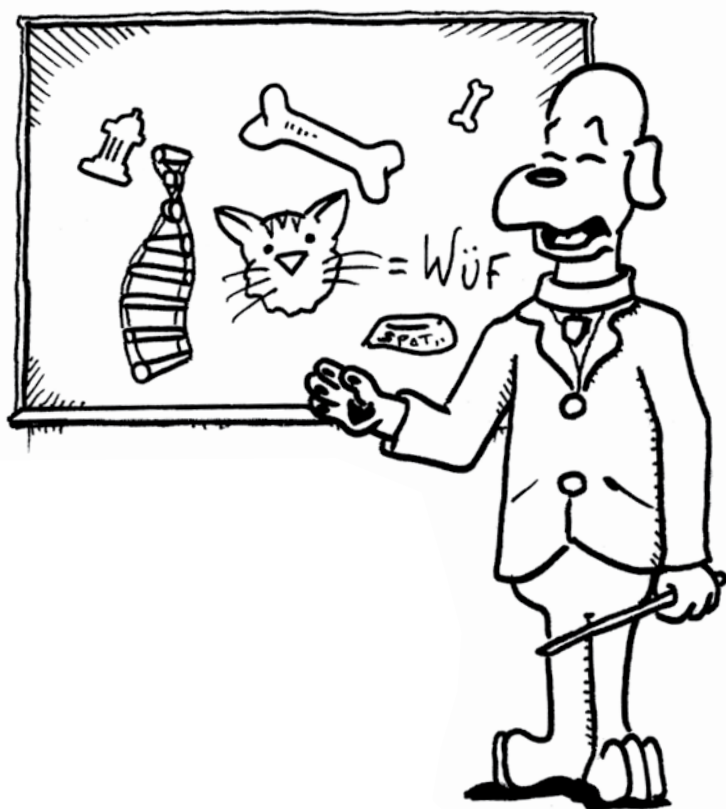
As a veterinarian, I am often asked, “What should I feed my pet?” This is a very important question, and I am really glad when people ask about their pet’s diet. In conventional medical practice, we tend to forget about the basics of supporting and maintaining health through diet, exercise, sunlight, and hygiene. We get carried away with the idea that there’s a pill for every condition, and if an accurate diagnosis can be made, then we can find the right pill. We also sometimes think that if we just take the pills, then we don’t have to watch what we eat or make sure we exercise.

With the advent of processed pet foods and the increased use of vaccines, there has been a corresponding decline in our pets’ longevity and health. Processed pet food is a far cry from what animals have evolved to thrive on. Dogs and cats are carnivores — meat eaters — and processed pet food is rich in carbohydrates and lacking vitamins, enzymes, probiotics, and fatty acids.

Processed pet foods were first invented in the 1950s, at a time when white flour, white eggs, and white rice appeared more desirable and cleaner than their less refined — but more nutritious — counterparts. “Better living through chemistry” was the slogan of the day.

These foods are often touted as “100% complete and balanced.” In reality, this cannot be true, as we certainly don’t know all there is to know about the nutritional requirements of any animal, even ourselves. The National Research Council standards for nutritional requirements of dogs and cats were set in the 1980s, based on brief studies performed on small numbers of animals. The results are similar to the recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) of vitamins and minerals for humans,—the minimum requirements will keep you alive but may not be sufficient to promote optimal health.

Pet foods are made from low-quality ingredients left over from the human food industry. These may be things that



the food industry has decided people won't eat, as well as things that aren't considered safe for people to eat.

Dry pet foods are highly processed. This means they are cooked at high heat for a long time, with the intention of eliminating any toxic material that may be present. This processing also eliminates most, if not all, of the health-promoting substances that we hope to gain from our diets. Vitamins, essential fatty acids, enzymes, and probiotics (healthy bacteria) do not survive the cooking process. The vitamins in pet foods may be added after cooking, yet a pet's digestive system may not be able to absorb or use synthetic vitamins appropriately. Fatty acids may also be added after the cooking process. These are volatile, which means that with exposure to oxygen — when you open the bag — they rapidly oxidize and basically vanish.

For the food to go through the machinery that makes the pieces of kibble, and to achieve the desired texture, dry pet food must consist of at least 50% carbohydrate. Dogs and cats are carnivores. This food is biologically inappropriate for their needs. Cats are considered to be true carnivores. They are designed to eat freshly killed prey. Their carbohydrate intake is typically limited to some grass and the stomach contents of their prey. Dogs have a wider dietary repertoire than cats, but even so it is questionable whether they need carbohydrates at all. Some types of carbohydrates are extremely allergenic, especially wheat and corn, and should not be included in pet foods.

During the last step of processing, the cooked pieces of food are sprayed with fat to help them stick together and to make the food tastier. This is why pet food is greasy to the touch. It also means that processed pet food must be kept in an airtight container and not left out for longer than half a day, because it rapidly becomes rancid.

Canned pet foods are also heat-processed, just like canned products made for humans. The cooking has the same effect of losing nutrients. The advantages of canned food



are that it's not as dry as dry pet food and that you can put more meat in a can.

The dry aspect is particularly significant for cats. Cats were originally desert animals (think of Ancient Egypt and the goddess Bast). It is normal for them to get nearly all their moisture requirements from their prey. It is not normal for them to drink a lot of water, which is what dry food forces them to do. The result is the epidemic of kidney failure that we commonly diagnose in cats that 25 years ago would have been considered middle-aged, but are now considered geriatric.

It is commonly believed that feeding dry pet food will help keep our pets' teeth clean. Whether your pet has clean teeth or not is actually more a matter of genetics, just like it is with people. This is why some people can eat candy all day and never get a cavity. Eating dry pet food is like eating cookies. Do your teeth feel cleaner after eating cookies? Dogs and cats would normally keep their teeth clean by eating the raw bones of their prey. This is an important part of their diet that is often neglected.

The 2007 pet food scare has brought all these issues to the forefront of public attention. Little did we know that thousands of tons of GMO, pesticide treated, and chemically contaminated ingredients were being imported from countries with low or no processing standards to be put into many national brands of pet food.

More recently there has been a rebound toward more natural foods and natural methods of health care, but this information is slow to trickle down regarding our pets. Also, it can be hard to find providers of pet health care who are sympathetic to these views and educated in the alternatives to the conventional medical system.

The conventional medical system has championed the science of medicine while perhaps losing sight of the art.

It does not offer definitions of health and disease. In my studies of homeopathy, one of the first things I learned is that there are very clear and obvious descriptions of the nature of health and disease. There are comprehensive guidelines that show you where you are on the spectrum between the two extremes.

Homeopathy is a system of medicine that aims to treat the entire organism. Homeopathic prescribing addresses the totality of symptoms, including physical, emotional, and mental aspects of disease, with one medication. It is a method that stimulates the body's own healing responses to effect a cure. At my practice, I use homeopathy for both people and their pets. However, successful homeopathic treatment depends on taking appropriate measures to support basic health, which brings us back to diet, lifestyle, and limiting vaccines.

The issue of vaccination is a controversial one in veterinary medicine. For years we veterinarians have taught our clients that missing the annual vaccines could jeopardize their pets' health and welfare. New information and research over the last several years is now showing that vaccines can damage the immune system and may give rise to the chronic diseases we commonly see in companion animals as they age.

For many years vaccines were perceived as harmless substances that, once injected, provided a cloak of immunity against all contagious diseases. This is a myth. Vaccines actually work by provoking the immune system to respond to a disease substance. Repeatedly provoking the immune system with the biological equivalent of an electrical shock may have negative effects that are not immediately apparent. Auto-immune hemolytic anemia (where the body destroys its own blood cells), immune-mediated thrombocytopenia (where the body destroys its own platelets), and lupus (where the body manufactures antibodies against its

own organs) are all examples of possible vaccine reactions. Other potential long-term side effects of vaccines are syndromes, such as canine hypothyroidism (which results from immune-mediated destruction of the thyroid gland), or even cancer.

A common complaint among pet owners is the epidemic of allergic symptoms seen in many dogs and cats. At first glance, allergies seem fairly benign. Everyone knows at least one person with allergies. Children are developing allergic symptoms, including asthma, at younger and younger ages. Advertisements for antihistamines appear on TV at regular intervals.

In reality, allergies are a malfunction of the immune system. The immune system begins to react appropriately to an irritating substance, but then can't seem to stop itself, or turn off the reaction. In dogs and cats this can manifest as persistent itching, hot spots, licking of legs and paws, chewing and biting of skin, a greasy coat, ear infections, anal gland problems, skin infections, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Is it wise to continue to provoke a malfunctioning immune system with vaccines? Is the animal's immune system going to be able to respond appropriately to the vaccine and to produce the desired immunity? Veterinary dermatologists tell us allergies can be controlled but not cured and they will get worse as our pets age. The animals are given antibiotics and injections of cortisone, which effectively shuts down the immune system and temporarily stops the allergic response. This course of action does nothing to support health; it merely suppresses the symptoms. Is this really the best that we can do for our pets?

As a veterinarian, I strive to teach my clients how to recognize the earliest signs of ill health, and to address simple things that can be done to reverse the onset of disease. Largely these include issues of basic nutrition and lifestyle.

A simple solution is to prepare our pets' food at home. The recipes included in this book offer an easy guide to improving our pets' health from within, by feeding them a more natural, less processed diet. The meat portion of these recipes can be cooked or fed raw. Either way, it may be optimal to supplement these diets with probiotics, fatty acids, and enzymes, while limiting vaccinations and taking a more natural approach to health care.



# Good Food Handling Practices

Just like when we cook for our human family, we must use safe kitchen practices when making meals for our furry family members:

1. Wash your hands in hot, soapy water. Rinse well, and dry before handling utensils or food.
2. Use separate cutting boards and knives for preparing meats, seafood, and produce.
3. Select fresh, natural ingredients.
4. Trim away excess fat from cuts of meat.
5. Thoroughly rinse all produce in cool water to wash away dirt and pesticides, or use organic produce.
6. Cook seafood, poultry, meat, and eggs for animals whose systems are compromised.
7. Serve your meals in clean dishes.
8. Store leftover food in airtight containers and refrigerate or freeze, if cooking in large quantities.

# Herbs and Supplements

## *Fresh Herbs*

Herbs are widely used by holistic veterinarians and herbalists and can be used to aid in a variety of conditions for your dog.

Here are some healthful herbs and their effects:

- **slippery elm**, which helps calm a nervous stomach, and soothes diarrhea or constipation
- **peppermint**, which soothes indigestion and gas
- **chamomile**, which alleviates indigestion and anxiety
- **mint, parsley, and dill**, which freshen breath
- **garlic**, which repels fleas
- **dried ginger**, which alleviates motion sickness

Use a pinch for small dogs and adjust the amount used for larger dogs based on the human dosage listed. Assuming an average human adult weighs 160 to 180 pounds, divide the amount prescribed to find the portion based on your dog's weight. You can give as much as 1 teaspoon for large dogs.

Remember, fresh herbs are twice as potent as dried herbs. So adjust the amount in a recipe if needed. If the flavor of an herb is too strong when sprinkled over food, you can make a tea from the herb and spoon a couple of table-spoons over the food.

## Supplements

Supplements can be useful in addressing specific issues, such as dry skin or fleas, but they are also a smart addition to your healthy dog's diet. All supplements should be *gradually* added to your dog's diet. Take at least 2 weeks to slowly build up to the recommended amount. Remember, too much of a good thing can cause harm, too. Moderation is the key to everything you do for or give to your dog.

One of the best all-around supplements we have found is The Missing Link. The product comes in different formulas for horses, dogs, cats, and humans. I strongly suggest everyone should try at least a 1-pound bag of The Missing Link. After 4 to 6 weeks of using the product, if you can honestly say you do *not* see any difference in your pet, don't buy it again. With The Missing Link we have seen many dog's skin problems disappear, digestive disorders become controllable, and energy levels become like those of a puppy again. Once you open it, put it in an airtight plastic container, and put the container in the refrigerator. This product is *completely* natural and has to be refrigerated once opened. The Missing Link supplement can be found at pet stores and feed mills. Just call and ask if they carry it.

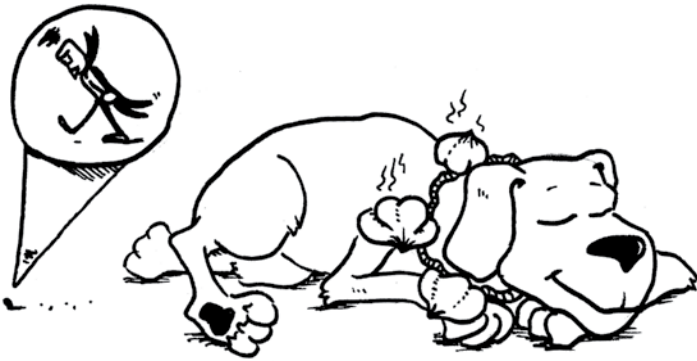
Regardless of what it is fed, every dog and cat should be on a whole-food supplement. The Missing Link is one example of this type of product.

In the winter months, when the furnace goes on, dogs can get dry skin. Just because your dog itches does not mean it has fleas. It could just be dry skin. You can help their skin at these times by adding fish oil and supplements.

## Garlic

Powdered, or fresh garlic is excellent for your dog's immune system. Garlic can also naturally repel fleas and ticks. It boosts your dog's immune system, so you will have an all-around healthier pet. Garlic powder can be sprinkled once





a day over the dog's food. Add a pinch for small to medium dogs and a bit more for larger dogs. Gradually work up to these amounts over a week or two.

### *Canned Pumpkin*

Canned pumpkin is great for our dogs! If your dog strains to go potty or gets diarrhea, it can help. Pumpkin or squash is a good source of fiber, which we all need as part of a good health plan.

### *Calcium*

If you are feeding a homemade diet consisting of meat, vegetables, and fruits, you will need to provide a supplemental source of calcium.

By far the best source of calcium for dogs is raw bones. Bones may be given for chewing, as some calcium is ingested in the process. Offering raw chicken or turkey necks, backs, or wings is an excellent calcium source, because the entire bone is consumed. Chicken and turkey parts can also be fed ground if you have access to a grinder or have a butcher who is willing to grind them for you.

The next best calcium source is eggshells. While they can certainly be crushed and added to food straight from the

carton, some people prefer to lightly cook the raw shells for 1 to 2 minutes in the oven or microwave. One eggshell contains approximately 2 grams of calcium.

Widely used as an ingredient in many homemade pet food recipes, processed bone meal is less highly recommended due to the risk of heavy metal contamination. Cattle graze in pastures that are contaminated with agricultural products and vehicle exhaust, which is concentrated in the animals' bone marrow.

Many pet owners and nutrition experts have spent a lot of time trying to calculate exactly how much calcium needs to be added to homemade diets, but the fact is that there is no handy formula to give us an accurate number. One study by the National Research Council (NRC) suggests a daily calcium intake of 320 mg per kilogram of weight for puppies and 119 mg per kilogram for adult dogs. The problem is that unless you are using a processed calcium product (which is less desirable than actual bones or eggshells), it is difficult to know the precise amount of calcium you are adding. Also, unless you are having the ingredients of each batch of your recipes scientifically analyzed, you don't know how much calcium already exists in the food prior to adding calcium.

It is important when you prepare homemade cooked or raw diets that you **don't spend too much time worrying about exact numbers**. Just as is the case for all humans and animals who do not eat the exact same diet from the exact same bag day after day, we may get more or less of various nutrients in each meal, but it all balances out over time.

Having said that, let's look at one general example. Based on the NRC recommendations mentioned above, knowing that an eggshell contains about 2 grams of calcium, and assuming that there is no significant level of calcium in the other ingredients in our homemade recipe, we can calculate some basic guidelines for supplementation.

A 20-pound adult dog would need about a ½ eggshell per day, a 40-pound dog would need 1 eggshell, a 60-pound dog would need 1½ eggshells, and an 80-pound dog would need 2 eggshells.

Be careful not to over-supplement calcium in large breed dogs! Too much calcium can lead to developmental problems in puppies, so add calcium only in moderation.

The chart below will help you determine amounts of supplements to include, based on your dog's weight.

**If your dog or cat is on any kind of medication, give a digestive enzyme.** If your dog or cat is on any kind of

### Recommended Daily Amounts for Supplements

	Small dog (under 15 pounds)	Medium dog (16 to 49 pounds)	Large dog (50 to 80 pounds)	Extra-large dog (81 pounds or more)
<b>Pumpkin or squash, canned, plain unseasoned</b>	2 tablespoons	4 tablespoons	4 to 5 tablespoons	6 to 7 tablespoons
<b>Ground flaxseed meal</b>	2 teaspoons	3 teaspoons	2 to 3 tablespoons	3 to 5 tablespoons
<b>Fish oil gel capsules</b>	500 mg	500 mg	1,000 mg	1,000 mg
<b>Regular fish oil (refriger- ate after opening)</b>	1/4 teaspoon	3/4 teaspoon	1 teaspoon	1-1/4 teaspoon
<b>Plain natural yogurt (with live cultures)</b>	1 tablespoon	2 tablespoons	3 tablespoons	3 tablespoons
<b>Garlic powder</b>	1/4 teaspoon	1/4 teaspoon	1/2 teaspoon	1/2 teaspoon
<b>Garlic tablets</b>	200 mg.	200 mg.	500 mg.	500 mg.
<b>Calcium</b>	1 gram	2 gram	3 gram	4 gram

antibiotics, be sure to supplement with a probiotic, because antibiotics kill the good bacteria in the digestive system. Plant Enzymes and Probiotics are a must if your pet's system is stressed from allergies or taking medications. Visit [www.animalessentials.com](http://www.animalessentials.com) for many all natural supplements for dogs and cats.

To learn more, call Dr. Jessica Levy at Whole Health Veterinary in Blaine, Minnesota, phone 763-785-2700 or visit her clinic's Web site at [www.wholehealthvet.com](http://www.wholehealthvet.com).

Remember, medications only **mask** what a problem really is. You want to take care of **why** there is a problem, to get to the root of the problem (see Additional Resources, page 148, for more sources of information).

## Asparagus Cheesy Chicken

*8 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves or thighs*

*2 10-ounce cans condensed broccoli-cheese soup*

*2 10-ounce packages frozen asparagus*

*½ cup milk*

*2 tablespoons butter*



**HINT**



Instead of asparagus, you could also use broccoli or green beans.



In a skillet, heat the butter and cook the chicken 20 minutes or until browned. Remove the chicken and slice it.

In the same skillet, combine the soup, asparagus, and milk. Heat to boiling.


Return the chicken to the skillet, reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook another 25 minutes or until the asparagus is tender.

This recipe makes 14 cups, which fills a 5-quart ice cream pail  $\frac{2}{3}$  full. Store the pail of food in your refrigerator.

## Hurry Up! Chicken Hotdish

6 chicken thighs or boneless skinless chicken breast halves  
 2 tablespoons sunflower oil  
 2 cans low-sodium cream of chicken soup  
 2 cups water  
 2 cups instant rice or brown rice  
 10-ounce package frozen peas, thawed  
 ½ teaspoon salt



**HINT**  Instead of peas, you could also use frozen green beans, carrots, or broccoli.



Sprinkle the chicken with salt and brown it in a large skillet with a little sunflower oil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer about 15 minutes. Set the chicken aside, slicing it when it is warm to the touch.

Mix the soup and water. Heat to boiling and stir in the rice and green peas. Top with the sliced chicken breasts. Cover and simmer over low heat about 10 minutes, stirring often.

This recipe makes 15 cups, which fills a 5-quart ice cream pail  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Store the pail of food in your refrigerator.

Tasty  Tidbit

**Flaxseed, sunflower, and safflower oils** are very high quality and popular “good” oils in natural diets because they are a good source of omega-6 fatty acids, which improve overall health by lowering cholesterol and triglyceride levels.