

A white, long-haired dog is sitting in a lush green field. The dog is looking to the right with its tongue out. In the foreground, there is a blue plastic water bowl. The background shows a clear blue sky with some clouds and a few trees in the distance. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

# Healthy Dog Diet *Secrets*

# **Nutrition and Feeding Secrets for Dog-lovers and Pet-owners**

## **Enabling Healthy, Slim, Trim and Fit Dogs**

**Pet Food and Diet Tips for Owners,  
Trainers, Breeders and Dog-lovers**

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**Dogs are not our whole life,  
but they make our lives whole.**

**Roger Caras**

## **Introduction**

- *Getting started and Making sense of Pet Food, Diet, Nutrition and Healthy habits, menus, options/choices and Routines*

Knowing what to feed your best canine friend(s), can be quite the challenge. Many options in the marketplace abound. Reading the nutrition labels only tell half the story. Owners and pet lovers need to know what they are putting into the systems of their pets. This growing, expanding market offers great choice and options, for varying budgets and preferences.

Are you aware of what the best/better choices would be for feed for your dog. Pet nutrition science, pet food marketing information can be confusing and overwhelming, but you can make healthier choices for your dog. Commercially you can find many quality products, for smaller and larger breeds of dogs. Most owners are looking for complete and balanced nutrition. Fats and proteins are not all your dog will need. There are many claims that some foods are better or so-called naturally healthier. This is not necessarily true.

Here are just some of the criteria you can utilize to screen for the best value and quality dog food:

- Palatability (taste)
- Acceptability
- Cost

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- Digestibility
- Suitability

For optimal health and vitality of your dogs, they do not necessarily need high levels of proteins. Too much of a good thing is never good. Obesity and nutritional disorders are on the rise, with more and more conscious decision-making about ingredients, formulations etc. put into focus the real need to take issue with what, how much dogs are consuming, balanced living and nutrition.

Here are just some of the key ingredients (especially if you have a growing puppy on your hands, or young dog, still developing:

- anti-inflammatory and immunity-boosting elements
- chelated minerals
- colostrums
- creatine monohydrate
- electrolytes
- glucosamine
- glucose polymers
- Omega 3 fatty acids
- powerful amino acids
- vitamins

... as well as, of course, TASTE, CALORIES, FATS & PRICE!

Gestating, lactating, pregnant, young, old, all breeds, all sizes of dogs/pets have differing nutritional needs and it is not just as simple as grabbing the nearest, closest, cheapest bag off the shelf to ensure proper, best-suited balanced, adequate nutrition.

Growing and aging dogs, adult, healthy, fit, working, sick, high performance dogs, all have very unique, (even individual varying),

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different needs, when it comes to their feeding, options, choices, variety, requirements, meals, portion sizes and different levels, mixes of:

- alpha-linoleic acid levels
- even lactose levels
- Fat
- Fiber
- growth and immune factors
- Meat/Protein
- vitamins and minerals
- whey and casein levels

With cheap, low cost, low quality dog-food, all the pet-food recalls lately, pet owners are more and more alert and aware of what they are choosing to put into their dogs bowls and bodies.

How many calories and where those come from both matter. Do you believe and trust the nutrition label on the dog food you buy (do you read it, know where the food comes from, what is in it, recommended portion sizes etc.

Regulatory bodies require as a bare minimum that by law, these nutrition labels should contain and list:

The product's full name

Net weight

Name and address of the producer

Guaranteed analysis

'dog' food

nutritional adequacy and method used for substantiating that claim

Here is an illustrative example of what that might mean in practice:

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The following table shows the AAFCO nutrient profiles for dogs.

Nutrient	Growth/Reproduction	Maintenance
Protein	22%	18%
Fat	8%	5%
Fiber	No recommendation	No recommendation
Calcium	1.0-2.5%	0.6-2.5%
Phosphorus	0.8-1.6%	0.5-1.6%

These recommended guidelines is a good starting point. Most of these are not exact, they are estimates and minimums. These figures apply to dry matter (not moisture) 6-10% of content might be water (even in dried foods), canned goods can have as much as 82%.

Dogs eat to get energy. Their calorie intake is what makes them agile, mobile, active and thriving animals, in good health.

Energy density is expressed as kilocalories (kcal) of metabolizable energy (ME) per kilogram of food.

Always evaluate the distribution of calories in the food. Most owners would want the optimal muscle development and additional energy for work, providing them with adequate protein and a higher proportion of fat.

Here is an industry example of what dogs would/could need:

<b>Nutrient</b>	<b>Working Dogs Less</b>	<b>Less Active</b>	<b>Growth</b>

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	<b>Active</b>		
Carbohydrate	12%	48%	32%
Fat	59%	30%	41%
Protein	29%	22%	27%
Crude fat	= not less than 16%		
Crude fiber	= not more than 3%		
Crude protein	= not less than 28%		

Calculate the total calories in 100 grams of food.

Carbohydrate	= 3.5 kcal/g
Fat	= 8.5 kcal/g
Protein	= 3.5 kcal/g

It follows then that

Carbohydrate	$3.5\text{kcal/g} \times 46\text{g} = 161 \text{ kcal}$
Fat	$8.5\text{kcal/g} \times 16\text{g} = 136 \text{ kcal}$
Protein	$3.5\text{kcal/g} \times 28\text{g} = 98 \text{ kcal}$
Total	= 395 kcal

100g - 28g protein - 16g fat - 3g fiber - 7g minerals = 46g carbohydrate

Calculate the percentage of metabolizable energy.



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Carbohydrate:	$(161\text{kcal}/395\text{kcal}) \times 100 = 40.7\%$
Fat	$(136\text{kcal}/395\text{kcal}) \times 100 = 34.4\%$
Protein	$(98\text{kcal}/395\text{kcal}) \times 100 = 24.8\%$

**\*\* NOTE: Once you know the energy density and caloric distribution, you can determine the amount of a particular food to give your dog.**

Whatever is on the label, just pick or lessen it to 25%, in conjunction with consideration of your dog's age, health and weight.

**What exactly is in the pet food? Can you find, read and make sense of the listing of ingredients?**

Also look for the AAFCO statement on the label, using words such as complete, (all nutrients for canine health), balanced is another example of what to find on the label to indicate proper amounts and ratios, when and which life-stage the foods is best/intended for. (Adult, Growth, Reproduction Phases and Stages)

Look for pet foods that have been tested by the formal regulatory body, like lab or computer-based modeling and testing, feeding protocols.

Choosing the correct food for a particular dog can call for some thought and action PRIOR to landing in their serving dishes and tummies. It involves considering several important factors that can

affect the quality of the food as well as your dog's quality of life, weight management, vitality and energy, even weight.

When thinking about types, amounts of food, consider

- Choose foods targeted for a particular life stage, age, breed of your dog
- Closest to AAFCO recommendations.
- Evaluate and compare foods meaningfully (based on DM or dry matter numbers)
- Life stage (age)
- Look for foods with balanced protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals.
- Minimize supplementation
- Mis-feeding of your animal (however well-intentioned!) can be detrimental to their health and wellbeing
- Other factors to consider include energy density and caloric distribution
- Overall body condition
- Overall health
- Source of ingredients (animal or vegetable) Some of the terms used for/in/on dog food are "premium," "super premium," "quality," or "natural." (these are not standards or definitions)
- Study the pet food label and nutritional information provided
- Your dog's weight, feeding/nutrition, daily intake calorie targets, optimal options, needs and requirements

Healthy weight in animals is the new trend. We need to look more and better at what we serve up to our animal and furry friends. Overweight and illness can be avoided and countered with the right type of nutrition.

Protect from disease and developing chronic diseases with good nutrition. If the animal does get sick, it will get better faster too, NOT

staying sick longer. Ensure longevity and optimal functioning through all stages of life for your dogs.

Protection, helping and enabling is what you are doing if you pick and feed them the right type, quality and amount of food with each feeding. Losing, maintaining weight are both critical for the types of food, amount, dog you have, its ultimate health and wellbeing, even longevity.

So, let us get right to what to do, choose, feed, measure, do and ensure to guarantee your dogs' mint conditioning and good health, weight and nutrition. You can make a difference, if you know how much, of what to feed you dog, combining it with an active, balanced, lifestyle, exercise and more, to ensure a full-rounded life and healthy pet all-around! This guide will take you through the steps you need to take, from start to finish to rediscover, refine and have a qualitative relationship with your four-legged and furry animal friend(s)!

### **SECTION 1: Some (TOP TEN) Initial Practical Tips to get you started with dog/pet nutrition**

- *Assessments, Baselines, Underlying Causes, Medical Make-up*

Getting started initially is easy. A trip to the vet is a good place to start. This is where and how you can find out the condition, weight, any underlying medical information, facts and conditions that your pet may be dealing with. This way there will be no uncertainties, problems, issues or complications that will go unnoticed, undiagnosed or forgotten, overlooked or ignored. It all starts with a physical fitness examination. Overweight pets have to be assessed, as there may be more you can do as an owner, changing habits, nutrition, getting more exercise, to ensure that they lose weight, be healthier all-round, not digging their graves with their teeth at your contributing hand! You

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may think that you are spoiling and pampering them, while you might actually be putting them at an increased risk of illness or even premature aging, potentially even dying.

Finding the right professional that cares about animals is also key. Screen and interview them to get the most affordable, highly skilled, trained and committed individuals, treatment teams on your side. Trust is critical, also see how your animal(s), respond and how they are handled and treated while there. It will tell you truckloads about that person, the care that your pet will receive. Ensure that they will be truthful and spare no punches, give tough love when needed. (even if it is hard to do, but in your and the pet's best interest). Even if this means feeding less, changing diet, getting more exercise, alternatives and routine adaptation, flexibility, more time together, smaller, less frequent feeding or reduced calorie intake, less treats and snacks, investing in exercise equipment, time, energy and effort to spend more time together, engaging in physical conditioning and activities. (It is not always easy for owners and pet-lovers to hear these kinds of messages!).

This guide is also about more than feed and losing weight, it is about that crucial first step, trust, evolving relationship that you have between man and animal. It is a treasured alliance and co-existence that you are entrusted with fostering and nurturing, cherishing and enjoying together over time. It will change your life! AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF/FOR YOUR PET/DOG!

Not unlike humans, the heftier pet are, the more weight they do end up carrying around, the higher their physical health risk, developing disease and illness, more strain on their body and systems, become. You do not want your pet to be at risk of/for anything. You want to preserve and improve their lives. Yet the very thing that might be undermining these efforts are what you opt to feed them with, treat

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them, do/not do. There is more to pet-ownership than dog food, daily walks and treats! Even a few pounds too many, obesity or overweight situations are unacceptable as they put them at increased risk and bodies under strain. Individualized, custom diagnosis, prognosis and care is the route to go. Get professional advice and assessments early on and right now (if you have not done so ever, or for a while). Remember too, that even though we do not particularly notice it, our pets age as well. They get older too! Their needs and lifestyles, even diet and nutritional requirements change with the different stages and phases of life.

Monitoring on an ongoing basis, pro-actively, deliberately and purposefully, what, how much your animal friends consume, take in, of what, food, drink, water, supplements, what they do/not do, exercise, walks, socializing etc. may all contribute and make a difference too. Are you enabling, hindering or helping your pet's health and optimal well-being? Are you part of the solution or part of the problem? You can start making it a top priority to get your dog/pet to the next, all-new, higher level, its next, healthier stage so to speak. Be partners and allies in getting and living more healthy all-round. Balanced living, active lifestyles are not only good for pets, but also good for owners!

For many pets genetics, breed and other hereditary factors may cause, underlie or contribute to their weight situations, physical appearance, medical condition, physique, physical fitness levels and longevity, not unlike people. You do not know, what you do not know is the motto here, then finding out the right thing to do. Have your pet checked by a qualified veterinarian. If there are any abnormalities, it is best to find out and know early that you can change your provisions and care accordingly and adjusted to their best scenario needs. It does not need to go undiagnosed, be a struggle, it just needs to be identified, shared and addressed together. You are never alone in this journey either.

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There is help and support both online and through your pet-care providers.

Illness, disease and weight gain, loss often go hand in hand. There are many complex reasons, interconnected aspects and root causes that might be leading to weight fluctuations, gains or loss. Treatment professionals and regular visits, check-ups and weigh-ins can help you track and monitor, ascertain whether this is an issue where your pet is concerned. Essential is to find out once and for all whether medical or genetic factors are at play here, OR if it is just feeding habits, quantities, treats, type of food, lack of a fully-rounded, exercise-filled daily routines, activities and exercise. Groundbreaking diagnostic tools, effective medications or other alternative holistic therapies can make a world of difference too. You can ensure that your pet is not prematurely or eventually suffering from either these types of challenges or at your own hand!

Other reasons pets gain weight can have something to do with their age, development stage or phase of life. Aging very much is part of a dog's life too, it is inevitable, undeniable and needs to be addressed. You will, can and should not be feeding a puppy, growing, adult or aging pet quite the same food, amounts and treating their bodies, needs differently almost is a no-brainer for most. So much so that it often goes overlooked or underestimated, even ignored! Shedding light on this aspect, the veterinarian can provide useful information on what these needs are, how they change over time, the best strategy, products and priorities that you can follow and things to do together to ensure balanced living, nutrition and health, maintaining a good, healthy body weight (regardless of breed, size or age!) Never undervalue that insights and shared wisdom from following a trusted qualified, caring veterinarian's advice and treatment options. A quick check-up, routine examination or full-spectrum blood tests can provide some more insights into what you need to do, change or intervene

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with in the life, menu, serving, eating, routines of/for your pet and household, care and activities that you share and enjoy together.

Treatment and intervention for illness or disease is of cardinal and utmost importance. Relief, longevity and quality of life for both you and your pet goes beyond the feeding dish and daily walks!

- *Healthy Pet-snacking: Doggie-treats can be healthy*

For most owners, slipping a doggy bone, snack or treat in here and there is part of the loving care that pets deserve and they so freely give. The problem with it is, when it is not done in moderation, contributing to weight gain and obesity, the unhealthy status of your dog, making them sicker, older before their time, even dying prematurely, at higher risk for illness, disease or death. WHICH IS THE LAST THING WE WANT!

Treats are great, the premise and rationale being that these are actually given as snacks and treat and not nutritional supplementation, adding to daily intake of calories in the extreme, (especially if they are not burning off that energy, getting the exercise that they require to burn those calories that they do not use!) This is not supposed to be a staple in your dog/pet's diet and life! Too much of a good thing is never good, right? Suitability and even recommended treats (unless the vet says otherwise) can be allowed and part of your caring, routines and lives of your pet, but in moderation, used appropriately and sparingly will be best.

Developing a palette and preference for the snacks and treats are easy. Once you've stepped down that path, it is difficult going back and changing habits, taste-buds, wants, needs and must have type behavior (for the both of you!)

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Not getting the foods, nutrition that pets actually need and should be getting, substituted with treats (which are typically less healthy, filling and nutritious), can be a trap that many fall into, even unawares!

Ask and answer for yourself what your dog/pets are getting, eating every day? How often do you hand out, give treats? Why and when do they want, get or crave them? What conditioning has occurred in this department that constitute bad habits on your/pet's part? Can and do you need to break this vicious circle once and for all?

Are you aware of what exactly your dog/pet needs from diet, snacks, exercise, balanced eating and living, for optimal health? What do your relationship, routines and habits do, contribute for your pet's health, quality of life, weight, social well-being and longevity? Do you know what your dog/pet(s) need in their diet? Why and how to best provide, choose, feed, supplement, measure and monitor intake, digestion, excretion and other tell-tale signs for doggie-health, problems, issues, medical warning signs etc. ? How are they affected by the snacks and treats that you provide? What is it teaching and conditioning them for? Is there room for consuming the right type, amount of calories daily, of nutritionally balanced food that they are given as well (in addition to the treats, or do they have no appetite, filling up on the wrong things)? If dogs could/do choose, they would opt for the treats! Stop and think about it for a moment. The reward is in more than the physical consumable! They are getting love, attention and special treatment, who would NOT WANT THAT! What are you enabling and facilitating in this department? Are you overindulging, spoiling or overfeeding your animal friend? STOP! And at least consider, evaluate and think about it for more than a mere moment!

Treats are the least food, low on the nutritional scale, top on the not-so-healthy, to even unhealthy (fats, salts, proteins content, flavorings, additions etc.). These products and choices can very easily lead to

more weight gain in your pet. You might be in a spiraling overweight pattern of behavior without even realizing it. Taking care of assessing your routines and habits, combined with the physical exam of your pet, will give you some answers and baseline on where your relationship and behavior is taking you. If you need to change course, you might very well have to (in the interest of your pets health and longevity!) to stop giving them, scale down or even change the types, timing and amount of treats and snacks, rewards that you are giving now.

Treats should not make up the majority of a dogs daily nutrition. If they are used frequently for training purposes, for distraction, while grooming (even the occasional bribe or token/expression of love, care and affection), limit the intake, size and frequency. Reduced calorie intake from treat products is a top priority. See how you can practically implement some of these changes and reap the reward of no more unnecessary weight gain, even weight loss for your pet.

- *What goes in must come out*

Sound relatively simple right? Wrong! Depending on the type of animal, life phase, medical condition, you might have to take more and serious issue what comes in and goes out! For the optimal health and well-being of your dog/pet, monitor, measure and ensure that your pet (like you) get the recommended intake of calories per day. Fueling the body with the energy that it needs is essential, even and especially where your pet is concerned. Monitor, track and follow professional recommendations for your particular, individual pet, size dog, type, breed, life-stage, developmental phase, appetite, age etc.

The type of dog and how much/little they exercise, get around and expend energies will all influence the amount of or how many calories they need for an average daily diet. A good rule of thumb is that mid-

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sized dogs, relatively active (getting at least 30 minutes of activity twice a day, need around 700 calories per day).

Your professional pet-care-giver will be able to best assess and advise you as to the particular need that your animal may have. Nutritional pet food labels also help (calories, suggested serving sizes), to ensure that you pick and serve the healthiest options for you pet, in the right quantities, frequency throughout the day.

Minimum serving sizes and structured nutritional, meal-time, actually monitoring how much of what your dog/pet ingests, eats and snacks on, will give you a fair idea on meals, treats, serving sizes, overall daily diet, calories and nutrition needed, consumed and any adjustments that need to be made in this department for optimal health, healthy weight and no unnecessary weight gain, putting their wellbeing at risk any longer! For some/most pet-owners learning that they are actually and enabler of over-eating can be somewhat of a wake-up call. Do not choose to ignore or overlook that problems that food, snacks and treats, daily intake of calories (especially if there are too many of them, energy is not expended, dogs are inactive, older or suffering from an illness or disease), to get, lose, control and sustain, even keep off excess weight as well.

Two easy ways to get the job of pet/food nutrition, healthy balanced living, feeding can be done, is by

- monitoring portion sizes, feeding times and frequency, snacks and treats (sources)
- Better food type selection, variety of diets within calorie goals, daily intake margins, parameters and recommendations specifically relevant and applicable for/to your pet/dog

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- *Watching what and how much consumption – portion/rationing - lessening intake (calorie reduction)*

A critical revelation for most pet owners, pet-lovers is that they might be to blame or contributing to excess weight in their pets. We do not intentionally mean to harm or overfeed our pets. Our habits, routines and choices just need to be brought into full awareness, under scrutiny and potentially even adjusted, eliminated in some cases, to ensure that our pets are not getting the wrong message and nutrition (despite of or because of our feeding, snacking, treating, loving pampering, 'care' and TLC!)

Pets that carry excess weight are at increased risk of developing illness, disease, die prematurely or even get complications, have difficulty moving and making it a top priority to have them take in less calories daily, to lose and maintain weight will become a daily routine, necessary adjustment for both owner/handler/lover and pet. The relationship with each other and with food will change forever and for the better!

Excess calorie intake, gets stored in our bodies (and those of our pets) as fat (energy storage). We are in constant survival mode as far as that is concerned and this is part of how we are designed and hot-wired to an extent.

If they are eating too much, simply put, they are not using all the energy and nutritional sources, which will mean the body excretes waste products, it does not need and stores the unused calories, as fat! Still wondering where all that weight gain and excess fat is coming from – start writing down in a daily food journal everything your pet consumes in a 24 hour period (over say 1 week) You will or might be astonished, surprised and prone to do things differently forever once you do this simple activity. Most of us go about our business (feeding our pets), without sparing a thought of how what we are in fact doing,

might be putting them at increased risk. Once you know or are aware of it, it is a no-brainer – things have to change!

Even just lessening calorie intake by 5-10% can make a world of difference in the life, health and weight of your dog. Make it a priority to help them to lose weight, be more active, eat less, eat better and use their energies, burning fat (stored), calories and enjoying life, not over-indulging, binging, over-eating! Also, take precautions not to starve or under-nourish your pet with unrealistic expectations, harming your animal in the long-run. Discuss your options and strategies with your veterinarian for practical tips and implementation over time, in the short, medium and longer time-spans and periods.

- *Occasional indulgences and regular meals (balanced nutrition)*

Moderation and balance, those are some of the keys and secrets at play and work here. Moving beyond feeding, foods, treats and snacks, brands, portion sizes, there is the holistic view and broader, in-depth topic of health, nutrition as a whole. Monitoring, planning, executing with precision and a plan is better than randomly going about filling dishes and serving treats when you think or feel like it. What you are doing in effect, will affect the health, diet, well-being and weight, even longevity of your pet. You will encounter and hear this phrase a lot in the unfolding pages. It is as if we know and recognize it, but when it comes to doing the right things, we tend to shy away from it, forget or overlook its true value and contributions! Do the right things for the right reasons can have a HUGE impact on the quality of life and health of our pets.

Ensure no more than 10 percent calorie and daily intake come from snacks, or treats, related indulgent or supplementary products. Check the nutritional label, all dietary information (both from the vet and the packaging of what you bring in)

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Have a food-feeding chart, journal for your dog, to see/monitor how much of what he/she actually consumes in a day, for a week, month etc.

Make the necessary adjustments in diet and supplementation to ensure healthy body weight (for your dog and its needs)

Get the calorie intake goal (daily) from your veterinarian, next multiply that number by .10. (this is the guidelines for allowable treat consumption) How much is your pooch getting? Too much, too little, not at all? Look at and evaluate your dogs, nutritional intakes for a bit and you might be surprised at what you might unearth, reveal and uncover about eating, habits and what is helping/hurting your pet! Break the treats in half and give them at difference times during the day

Avoid treats at time when metabolic activity is low (before bedtime)

Do not give dogs the full recommended serving size, cut calories

Read the nutritional labels (food/snacks), to know what you are feeding, how much, how often, in what quantities, why, when etc.

- *Other possible reasons for weight-gain/loss*

Considering probing and pin-pointing if/why pets/dogs are gaining weight is also never a waste of time. Sometimes the causes might remain a mystery, elude or be more complex than initially thought. The deeper you look, the less you find or it might be as simple as changing the status quo, some habits and routines, to effectively lose, control and maintain healthy body weight. In some cases though health, illness, disease, age/aging, medical, genetics and other factors also play a role as potential causes, influencers, triggers or contributors to weight gain/loss.

It is a myth that getting a pet spayed or neutered causes them to gain weight. It is simply not true, UNLESS they end up using less energy,

needing fewer calories in their diet and actually EATING TOO MUCH! Then the pets will be gaining excess weight, storing fat and increasing their size, BUT it has nothing to do with the procedure or because of it!

There is more at stake and play here than meets the eye at first glance. There has to be the accompanying reduction in feeding volume, lower daily calorie intake (as they are no longer following their instincts, reproductive urges, chasing other pets around), so will need to eat less (OR INCREASE THEIR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY!)

After-care, following these procedures will most likely contain some form of guideline on calorie intake reduction. Pay close attention to the post-operative instructions and ask if you are uncertain. You can never go wrong with a balanced, variety-type, healthy diet – eating for the right reasons, the right types of foods, in the right quantities and amounts, at the right times. That is part of the puzzle-piece and master-key to success with pet nutrition.

Less calories, less stored fat, less weight gain, more activity, healthy weight, active lifestyle – those are the key ingredients for what will make the difference for wellbeing and maintenance over time, even if your pet is 'fixed', spayed or neutered!

- *Getting it right the first time with pet-diet and nutrition*

There are many differing lines of thought, arguments to be made for should or should not be fed (best for), dogs, puppies, your pet. Brands, experience and performance all come into question. The best or most accepted dog-food might not be the optimal choice, option for your pet (it all depends).

Opinions and shared wisdom, even research differs. It is for the most part still something that science is researching and working to get the real 'answer', (if there is such a thing!).

However, when it comes to dog-food, what you feed, how much, how often, of what DOES MATTER!

**\*\* NOTE: Did you know that there are increases in risk of skeletal diseases in medium and large breeds predisposed to developmental bone disorders based on some types and quantities of high-protein, high-fat type diets, brands of dog-food?**

It certainly sounds good to give a developing dog something that will help with their muscles, skeletal structure development, right? Well, it could also have dire consequences, as we keep discovering (depending also on whom you choose to ask about it!)

Some of the difficulties that creep up/in are:

- hip dysplasia
- hypertrophic osteodystrophy
- osteochondritis dessicans
- panosteitis

... and many MORE!

Pet-owners and lovers need to take serious issue with working to minimize occurrence of these disorders. Pick foods that do not encourage or claim to foster that rapid and maximized growth in puppies but rather enable a gradual, progressive growth curve obtained through restriction of high-calories and avoidance of rapid weight gain, particularly between the ages of 4-8 months, thus ensuring lesser/lessened stress on developing joints and bones.

Take real issue, be informed and make wiser, smarter choices regarding (i) the nutritional requirements of the dog for the purpose of

## Healthy Dog Diet Secrets

selecting good-quality dog food. (ii) common misconceptions regarding feeding and supplementation (iii) medical findings as they pertain to dog nutrition, foods, brands, weight, etc.

Although they are meat-eaters, a balanced nutritional plan is key for dogs. Every individual pet will have special and specific needs, so what is good/great for one, might not suit the purposes and requirements of another. Unique dietary needs and requirements will have to and might need to be addressed and considered separately – there is no ONE SIZE FITS ALL HERE!

The type of pet, breed, genetics, age, life-cycle stage/phase, gender etc. will also affect what in the end is considered the healthiest diet for them. Different pets need different things, (not unlike human beings!).

You can find resources on the web as well as through your pet's vet to help you to determine the best foods for them to eat, based on their weight, type and dietary needs. To take the guess-work out of canine nutrition, recommendations for the daily nutrient intake for proper growth and maintenance of dogs is outlined by the National Research Council's Nutrient Requirements of Dogs (NRC) and American Association of Feed Control Officials' (AAFCO) feeding trials.

Other factors that can also influence and play a role here, are:

- body weight
- level of activity
- environment
- pregnancy
- lactation
- aging
- Bloodline
- Type/size of dog

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- Genetics
- Illness/disease/medical
- Physical conditioning, fitness of dog

... and many other inter-related or relevant influencers.

Ask and answer for yourself what the right, most appropriate and necessary levels of protein, fats, vitamins, and minerals FOR YOUR DOG is – that is the real question at the core here of how much of what, when, how often?

How would you know that your dog is getting enough of what matters MORE/MOST? Here are some tell-tale signals, signs and symptoms to be looking for:

THINGS YOU CAN ACTUALLY SEE/OBSERVE - exhibited signs of good health and nourishment

- Agility
- Alertness
- bright eyes
- Getting all their daily calorie intake/targets - necessary nutritional requirements are met
- glossy hair, fur, shiny coat
- good and regular defecation habits
- good appetite
- Mobility
- proper weight
- regular urination
- unblemished skin
- Vigor

Ensure a balanced diet of high quality foods specific to the individual pet's dietary requirements does not need to be the most expensive brand either necessarily.

Making small changes, might actually save you money or cost even less than you have come to expect! Ask and talk to breeders, who have pet's best interest at heart (rather than a sales person who might just be looking to pawn off products!). Find out and take the time to learn what might be BEST for your dog!

Here are some key facts and inquiry into dog nutrition, pet food and feeding elements

**QUESTION # 1: HOW WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN GOOD QUALITY DOG FOOD?**

*WHAT TYPE AND HOW MUCH PROTEIN?*

- A good rule of thumb is around 22% protein in dry dog food for basic maintenance;
- building blocks for growth and repair of the body.
- Choose and opt for highly digestible sources of protein to provide for special energy requirements and prevent protein depletion.
- Dogs who have a high daily energy requirement, need MORE!
- essential amino acids
- Excess protein is not stored, degraded and excreted by the kidneys.
- If the dogs do not use it, they lose it (excrete it with no additional benefit, even if it cost you more)
- Just MORE protein on a nutritional contents label DOES NOT GUARANTEE MORE OF A nutritional advantage.
- MORE will be needed in specialty cases like pregnant or lactating bitches.

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- The source of the protein MATTERS! MEAT IS BETTER THAN SOY for example.

What could happen if a dog does not get enough PROTEIN OR TOO MUCH:

- Anemia
- contraindicated in breeds which undergo rapid growth phases
- Encourage an increase in food consumption (pets eat/crave MORE) DOES NOT lead to kidney dysfunction in adult dogs
- essential for repair of the body during and after illness
- eventually death potentially, if they do not get enough over time, daily
- increased susceptibility to disease
- loss of body weight
- protein intake directly effects growth rate
- TOO MUCH can also lead to nutritional skeletal diseases

### **QUESTION # 2: WHAT ABOUT GOOD/BAD, HEALTHY, STORING OF TYPES OF FATS IN THE PET-DIET?**

- Boost fights and defenses against inflammation and immune regulation
- Critical element for growth
- Dietary fatty acids
- Ensures maintenance of healthy skin and coat.
- Has a role to play in the reproduction cycles
- Increased caloric intake might require more fat intake leading to problems later in life
- Minimum of 5% fat in dry dog food is recommended
- Typical in commercial brands are around 10% fat
- Working dogs might need MORE fatty acid supplements

TOO MUCH FATS can lead to ...

- Degeneration of red blood cells
- Flatulence
- Heart trouble and underlying medical complications
- Obesity

**QUESTION # 3: WHAT ABOUT VITAMINS AND MINERALS IN THE PET DIET/FOR DOGS?**

- Healthy dogs rarely require supplementation
- Most pet foods have added vitamin and mineral content
- Processing and storage of pet food can lead to the loss of key nutrients like these

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING IS NOT GOOD!

- abnormalities like Osteochondritis
- Appropriate calcium:phosphorus ratio is essential for bone integrity. Increased resorption or mineralization of bone
- Causing imbalances
- Contributor to skeletal disorders.
- Interferes with normal homeostatic responses
- Problems in the gastrointestinal tract
- Rather opt for complete vitamin and mineral nutrition
- Supplementation sometimes used for medium and large breeds  
Used to prevent eclampsia in pregnant bitches and skeletal problems in puppies.
- Too much Calcium and vitamin D is not good
- zinc deficiency where supplements with calcium inhibits absorption of zinc.

**QUESTION # 4: HOW MUCH FOOD TO FEED YOUR DOG/PET?**

Only choose and feed a balanced, quality brand dog food

Recommended amounts (based on weight/breed of dog)

Feeding too much can lead to obesity and excess, unhealthy weight gain

- 8-16 weeks old puppies: ½ - 1 cup, four times daily
- 16 weeks - 6 months: 1 - 1 ½ cups three times daily
- 6 months and through adulthood: 2 cups at each feeding twice daily

Other factors to consider and include, above and beyond these guidelines are:

- Metabolism
- Activity
- Growth phase
- Lean mass/muscles, bones, coat etc.
- requirements of the individual dog
- Measure results and effectiveness by appearance of the dog

**QUESTION # 5: WHAT GUIDELINES, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARE THERE FOR PET NUTRITION, FEEDING AND DIETS?**

- Stick to what works! Do not change the diet too often, of the dog might develop some quirky palette preferences or strange eating habits (balanced variety is good)
- Stick to a particular brand of dog food (if it works for your pet) – there is not a need to change it
- Change the brand, type of food if there is any allergic response, adverse reaction or performance issue related to the food

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- Do not change the food frequently that could lead to gastrointestinal upset
- Allow for 10 minutes to eat, with bowl-removal when time lapsed , even if there is food left over
- Avoid irritation by making gradual changes (6 weeks – 3 month time-frame)
- Feeding less and smaller meals more often is better, managing metabolism, blood-sugars and energy levels throughout the day
- Do all you can to avoid potential gastrointestinal complications or even bloating
- Avoid excess food consumption, excess water intake, or build up of gas
- Be aware that it can lead to a distended stomach cutting off vital blood supply.
- No drinking of large volumes of water or exercise immediately after eating

### **QUESTION # 6: WHAT KIND OF DANGEROUS, HAZARDOUS, ALLERGIC ASPECTS AND FOODS TO AVOID SHOULD BE CONSIDERED:**

There are some allergens, known from the human diet that could be detrimental, cause problems, have adverse effects and be classified as dangerous or off-limits, non-dog or pet-friendly foods, that should be avoided (even if suitable or enjoyable to humans). There are things that you like, that might actually be poison or deadly to your dog's health and nutrition, well-being and threaten his/her life!

If you like it or it tastes good, does not mean it is suitable for your pet to ingest or enjoy!

**\*\* NOTE: If dogs do or have ingested any of the following (however small the quantity), contact a veterinarian or animal**

***poison control immediately without delay and get medical attention. They would recommend you induce vomiting within two hours of ingestion.***

Weighing and choosing between what you consider a 'treat' or even for or due to accidental ingestion resulting or contributing to possible illness or worse, death and you see just how important it is to keep this (and other harmful substances), away from your dog at all time! DO NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO FEED IT TO YOUR ANIMAL OR LEAVE IT LYING AROUND! Watch when you put out those seasonal or party treats!

Support, care, TLC, stomach pumping, removal of source or exposure, induced vomiting is the best response and treatment, with immediacy and no hesitation.

Any of the following can cause liver damage and kidney failure in dogs/pets:

- Candy
- chewing gum
- Kids and other chewable vitamins
- Toothpaste
- Xylitol or sugar substitutes

Fish and seafood allergies can be fatal too (some pets will have more sensitivities than others, some might have to get tested and avoid it altogether)

Fruit-pips and seeds can cause cyanide poisoning due to cyanogenic glycosides (apricot, peach pits)

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Hop toxicity or ingestion or any form, type or amount of alcoholic beverages or beer, are hazardous (contrary to popular or intoxicated beliefs or perceptions). It can very easily lead to malignant hyperthermia that is fatal (especially if ingesting beer)  
Grapes and raisins cause acute kidney failure in dogs, with vomiting being quite common, with renal failure (3-5 days later)

Another BIG NO-NO, is any form of chocolate. It is highly toxic and detrimental to dogs/pet, due to the element and ingredient called theo-bromine. This is a chemical stimulant or the methyl-xanthine alkaloids variety. Their bodies and organs cannot digest, break this down, absorb or get rid of it effectively! It stays in their bodies for up to a full day, in the bloodstream and can increase their heart rate, lead to severe diarrhea, epileptic seizures, heart attacks, internal bleeding, hallucinations and eventually death.

Macadamia nuts have dire consequences and effects to, ranging from stiffness, tremors, hyperthermia, to intense abdominal pains and discomforts

No onion or garlic: It contains thio-sulfate which causes hemolytic anemia in dogs (and cats). Watch ingredient listing, processed meats that might have traces of onion powder in it. It is toxic and deadly!  
Quite common with all or most of these dangerous ingestions, also would be onsets of diarrhea and vomiting.

Whether there is a genetic predisposition for developing food allergies or just an adverse reaction, STOP, assess and get help!

Other symptoms and indication that something diet or nutrition, even allergy-related is going on can include:

- chronic ear infections

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- diarrhea
- dull coat
- hair loss
- skin lesions
- weight loss

A multitude of disorders may also cause or contribute these types of manifestations. Your best bet would be to get the input of a veterinarian.

Experts also advise that you should avoid lamb-basted products until the dog is at least 2 years old

Pregnant, gestating and lactating dogs will need more and different, even enriched nutrition, before, during and after the delivery processes.

Here are some other things to consider for female, pregnant dogs:

- Avoid any vitamin supplementation or calcium supplementation during pregnancy
- Avoid table foods as they can cause gastrointestinal upset
- Give more early on, especially in the 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> week of the pregnancy
- Increase feeding amounts
- Increased stomach acidity
- Loss of decreased appetite
- Opt for smaller portions and fed more frequently
- Pick food that is more balanced, tasty and higher in vitamins, protein, and calories
- Refusal of any solid food as delivery draws near (typical 24-48 hours before delivery)
- Upset stomach during the pregnancy

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- *New perspective and outlook: Organic, Healthier, more balanced*

Holistic pet nutrition, balanced, variety, that is affordable, safe and good for our pets, is what most owners are after. Once flipping and reading through the labels and nutritional information, you need to scour through the list of ingredients, additives etc. to really judge for yourself. All dog-foods are not created equal! Whole, balanced foods, offering all the vitamins, minerals and essential nutritional building blocks are key.

The ones listed first are typically the higher content (not always!) Check into and avoid if you can those with extremely high salt, fat, fillers, non natural foods and even chemicals that could harm with prolonged exposure.

Some pets have limits and dietary restrictions that you need to consider as well that will have you reaching for something other than the cheapest bag on the shelf necessarily.

Opt for less fattening qualities and ingredients of high quality. Ensure whole and natural choices from online sources or quality pet stores. It might be more expensive in the short term, but a solid investment in quality pet food nutrition will save costs down the line (less illness, less veterinarian costs, bills, hospitalizations etc.). Better quality life all-round, more energy and potentially longevity and well-being can all be part of the results gained here.

- *Inappropriate choices and alternatives not-so or NON pet-friendly food-choices*

Dogs might have a variety of different reactions to food, some very individualistic, breed-related, reactions, responses and effects. Some may have trouble controlling, gaining, losing or maintaining their current weight. Excess, obesity or being overweight can be due to

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insufficient portion-control, feeding too much, too often or too many daily calories, even intakes or supplements that are not needed, called for, or appropriate (treats, human-consumption type foods).

If you are preparing dog-food, using the same ingredients as you would for your own table, you need to remove all traces and inklings of spices and seasonings, artificial flavorings that might be hazardous, dangerous, even fatal to your dog.

Calorie-counting, cutting out too much fat, protein, salt etc. from their diets can save lives and improve quality of life of pets as well.

As a proud pet-owner take yourself to task to ensure a good, healthy, balanced diet. It does not take that much energy, time or resources. You will reap the reward of/on your investment in no time flat!

Many dogs, pets fall into bad routines, habits and patterns and eat what you offer them. It is your priority and onus to provide a healthier diet and lifestyle. It should be a partnership that serves the interest of your pet. Weaning off human-suited cuisine is best for them, might take some care and persistence, even patience, from both of you, but in the long run it is better. Gradual changes, small steps taken is the best way to approach this.

- *Altering, adjusting and changing diets*

Weight loss, shedding excess pounds is often a problem for some pets and owners. Taking the first brave step and gradually increasing until consumption is more balanced, eating spread out throughout the day. Dry and wet food mixes, natural food flavorings especially developed for this purposes can make the transition earlier. Mix in the healthier alternative with their existing diet and wean them off gradually, that is the key to success.

Once you get up to half and half (\*old/new), you are well on your way to better nutrition, balanced eating and living for your pet and peace of mind for you. They will be more amicable and likely to try it this way. Be careful not to give too much, keep increasing the newer food or alternatives, while decreasing the older food preferences and weaning them off bad habits and choices – it will get easier over and with time passing.

### **SECTION 2: Factors and Influencers to also consider as part of your strategy and action plan for pet/dog nutrition, health and balanced living**

- *Age, medical conditioning of your pet plays a role too*

Aging is as much part of your dog's life, as it is of your own journey – its is inevitable that we grow older and will die – it is just a fact of life, no denying or ignoring it. That does not however mean that you cannot enjoy life in the here and now or obsess about dying!

Needs and appetites will change, some even requiring an adjusted, smaller or special diet. This is not the time to introduce new foods and fads necessarily. Aged or older dogs' immune and digestive system, gastrointestinal tract might not handle it as well.

Special diets, due to illness or underlying medical conditions need to be taken seriously and all detailed instructions followed to a tee. If you do not stick to the regimen as recommended, the effectiveness of some of the medications might even be affected and you will once again be putting your pet at risk. If there are any complications due to a switch or change in diet, the stop and get medical intervention, help and advice.

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For the overweight pet in this situation, work with your doctor to For obese and overweight pets, particularly, reduced calorie intake and relevant eating habits, adjusted portion sizes are critical and should be followed. If possible, more activity and physical conditioning, fitness can also be made a top priority more and more in and through daily routines – get out there and socialize with other dogs to. Partner with care-providers and professional pet nutritionists to assist you through every step of this process. Particularly for dealing with animals in their later stages of life and/or complications due to age, aging or medical issues.

- *Facilitating Digestion (salt, fiber and fat)*

Balancing fats and fiber can also enable your pet to lose weight and shed more pounds effectively.

Nutrients are still taken in, reduced calories, better types of healthier foods, reducing effectively the amount of fats actually taken in, countering fat storage in the body. Finding ways to energize and burn fats, calories through exercise and daily activity, walks, runs, playing in the park, outside yard are great ways to keep them in mint condition, even through, while changing and adjusting diet.

Custom, tailor your dog's diet to its own individual needs that is still considered the best approach, most effective over time. Limit the amount of fiber and fat that they should consume based on guidelines provided by vet for example. Combine these with other weight loss methods and techniques for the best results. Nutritional labels, books, websites and guidelines by regulatory bodies can all help you in this quest. Vitality and health are essential components of the dog/pet diet(s). Which begs the question, what did they eat before dog food per se? Many propose the BARF (bones, raw meat, eggs, veggies and some kibble for a balanced nutritional meal.

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Some of the proponents and advocates of this type of diet, claim that dogs have

- Benefiting from all-round psychological, emotional, and immune system boosters
- Better dental health, cleaner teeth (and breath!), less to no periodontal disease
- Better eating habits
- Health and vitality
- healthy stools
- More energy for exercise
- no anal sac problems
- Reduced obesity
- Significantly improved digestion

Guarding against bacterial infections. E. coli and Salmonella and some who do not believe it to be quite as safe as presented still reserve judgment on suitability and favor, or support for these types of diets.

### ▪ *Pet-food and serving Tips, Additions*

Many marketing and ad campaigns, packaging and labels tote the weight loss, low fat numbers and convincing language to have many pet-owners clamoring for their products and pet food bags flying off the shelf. But remember that none of these products are created equal and sometimes, fiber and fats, proteins and carbohydrates form part of the formulation in varying degrees, as do fillers and additives. Supplements and additions are not necessarily a good thing, or required at all. Those added sugar, salt or empty hidden calories can start adding up and lead to more weight gain for your pet, (even significantly so).

## Healthy Dog Diet Secrets

Some questions to ask yourself about your dog's nutrition:

- *How can they form an intricate part of overall nutrition, meals and daily routines and how can you then incorporate them into your pet's daily lifestyle (without leading to more and unnecessary weight gain)? Does your dog/pet have specific needs in weight loss that this food, portions would enable, hinder or help?*
- *How will it affect my dog?*
- *Is it and does it offer enough for your dog to live, survive and thrive on OR too much of things he/she does not need?*
- *What is the nutritional value of the total package?*

It is more about following and having a balanced diet, than it is about lower calories and weight lost.

Serving sizes and recommended portions will vary, depending on the manufacturer, type of food, dog it is catering to. Again these are averages and remember, it comes from those selling the product, interested not so much in your pet's health necessarily, but seeing more of the products flying off the shelf. Typically the suggestion is to discuss your dog's nutritional needs with your professional care-giver, veterinarian to get the optimal weight, size and needs within acceptable parameters for your dog specifically, on a case-by-case merit. No two dogs are the same (not even from the same litter). Their needs will be unique upon themselves and even in a multi-dog, pet home, what is good for one, might not be so for the other (genetics, breed, age, sequence of birth etc).

Balanced food intake does not have to be an endless, ever-elusive pipe-dream. You can make it happen. Ensure that the pet is optimal body weight and not gaining or losing as a good parameter of appropriate feeding schedules and portions sizes.

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Types of food, food typically made and optimized for a specific breed, age, etc. will have more or less of the calories as per requirement and specifications, guidelines and it is up to the owner to pick the best one from the bunch and match that with the needs of the pet in question and his/her furry friend's unique characteristics, circumstances and needs. Puppies and aging dogs will not require the same levels of nutrients or nutrition, calorie intake for that matter as their needs and life/growth, development cycles differ so significantly. One is just starting up and the other winding down. Food and feeding sources should address these differences.

A wide variety of pet products exist in today's market. There are many a quality enhancer and food flavoring to enjoy and include as topping or mix-in for these delicacies for canines. Pouring, sprinkle-type powders, sauces and gravy are all available to please even the most selective of palettes and finicky eaters. There are many a hidden and empty calorie or two stored in there and they add up over time. Translating into excess weight and pounds being carried around.

With a significantly high content consisting mostly of fats and calories, these lead to easy, yet steady, problematic weight gain over time. Reduce intake and calories daily, if you are opting to use and utilize these.

No benefit for health and puts at risk wellness and wellbeing. The pay-off, risk/reward equation is just not balanced enough to justify the use of this method at all. Remove them gradually for the diet, is the best advice.

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- *Less is more, is better!*

Starvation and food deprivation is definitely NOT the way to go either. Ensure that the newer food you are migrating to, is in fact as healthy as you think it is. Ensure through any transition hold or change, that you are in fact doing what is best for the pet food is the healthiest it can be for them. Does it meet their nutritional need? If so, then feeding them less of it can help them to lose weight.

If the nutritional content is questionable, then rather do not include it at all, gradually eliminate it or switch to healthier, natural alternatives. Losing weight is not the only goal and target here, but a combination strategy and integrated plan will serve your purposes better. You might even add a year or two to your dogs life-expectancy if those pounds can come off and stay off and you wean them off these 'treats' and extras. Labeling, vets recommendations are great guidelines and posts to utilize in this quest and on-going battle.

- *The role of Breeds and Genetics*

Breeding, genetics, species, bloodlines all matter. Some have a predisposition to being obese, carry or put on excess weight.

Breeds and lines that are MORE susceptible include

- Basset Hounds
- Beagles
- Border Collies
- Cairn Terriers
- Cocker Spaniels
- Labrador Retrievers
- Shetland Sheepdogs

## Healthy Dog Diet Secrets

Action plans to have and keep a healthier pet, does not have to be a difficult decision necessarily. If you are aware of any obesity-related or weight gain/loss issues with maternal/paternal side, the onus is on you to ensure that you do not feed and fuel that genetic trait. Just because the parents had it, and they are more prone to it, need not be a sentence of despair and inevitability for your dog. It is not a doomsday diagnosis and certainty. You both can do a lot to turn that tide in your favor.

Diet and exercise (right type, quantity, frequency, intensity, balanced nutrition, healthy, no snacking/treats, added calories, flavorings and no passive-type lifestyle, can all contribute to make this a healthier outlook for your particular pet, regardless of these complicating factors. Your pet can retain a healthy weight throughout his/her lifespan despite their genetic make-up. The key is not waiting for weight to become a spiraling out of control type problem, but acting in a proactive fashion to doing something meaningful about it. Prevention, intervention and correction are the tools of the trade here and the key ingredient in your defense strategy arsenal. GO on the offensive on reducing calories and getting rid of excess in the diet, that will not be used as energy sources, but stored as fat!

- *The realities and intricacies of pet-weight gain*

Varying degrees of weight loss is commonplace in pets of different shapes and sizes, even those from the same litter living in the same house will be different. Again we say, there is NO ONE SIZE FITS ALL type solutions here. It is a very individualistic type of strategy and suggestions, reflective of the reality – when it comes to dogs, what is good for one, might very well NOT be good for another/other!

Dietary requirements for individual dogs, what is considered necessary or optimal weight (weight loss amounts) will also vary. There is a

bigger likelihood of success if you set realistic, attainable, gradual goals for weeks and months, to track the progress and path that you and your pet are embarking on. IT motivates and baselines for you how you are doing. The amount of weight that is advisable, varies and ranges from 0.5 through 2% week.

For larger animals it might be more, for smaller build, stature and breeds, even less than the minimum. You need to discuss this with the pet-caregiver and/or vet prior to setting off taking off and shedding the pounds. Undernourishment or starvation is harmful, inhumane and counter-productive. The body will kick into survival mode and start storing fat, undermining your energies and efforts and will not as such reward your pet for the sacrifice and commitment. Healthy eating is more important than shedding those pounds through NOT EATING!

- *Supplementation and nutritional additions*

Nutritionally speaking there also needs to be taken into account adding to the diet, necessary vitamins and minerals (when required ONLY, as prescribed or advised by a vet). Most products on the market today are NOT geared towards allowing your pet to lose weight effectively. Think about it, these manufacturers are in the business of selling more products, so it makes sense that sometimes you will not be getting the best that the market has to offer, or they want your pet hooked for life, repeat business, so average serving sizes on the packaging might just be too much and pets might be eating 5-10% MORE of what they need/should. This is a good starting point – just cut the extra calories right here. Reduce the calorie daily intake and see the results – the effect will be within the first week!

Your goal and target is an animal that eats well, when they need to, be active and losing weight effectively for good.

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These types of additions to the diet, tries to capture and make up for imbalances or shortcomings that ordinary food, feeding and nutrition does not provide. It will depend on the type of food, how much and what type of animal, specific individual needs the animal has.

- *Tracking, monitoring progress, thriving, appetite*

Measure and ascertain what your pets real needs are. Are all the requirements met through what you provide currently through diet and exercise? Are there any additional needs, specific underlying conditions (medical, pregnancy, breeding) etc. that requires something for a period of time or on an ongoing basis? What will the long-term effects and consideration be? Most of the nutritionally balanced foods will have full=spectrum inclusion of what dogs need, but may not address these individual and special circumstances, thus the need for add-ins, add-ons and supplementation.

Aging and life-phase, metabolic rates, fitness levels, medical conditions, all affect how much dogs eat. Not unlike human beings their appetites and need will fluctuate and differ through time. This affects how much of what they will eat. The needs of a puppy, growing, younger dog and an aging adult, slowing down, needing and eating less, can not and should not be approached in a similar way.

Growth, development, playfulness, need of and for energy will vary greatly (even for pups from the same litter!). Bone and muscle development is critical earlier on in a dogs', maintenance and health sustainable in old age, needing more and different types of attention and nutrition.

Aging, disease, agility, activity levels will have to be taken into consideration.

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Food intake, nutritional levels all matter too. Depending on how much of what they actually consume, they will need more/less vitamins, minerals, calcium or Vitamin D for example.

Having a realistic handle on the condition, optimal and actual weight of your pet, will lay out the challenge and road ahead for the two of you. Weekly and regular weigh-ins are essential to determine if the pet is obese, healthy weight, can stand to lose a pounds or two, at risk for illness and disease, even death if this continues – this will help you determine the real state of affairs and face the music on what has to happen, urgency and if or not you are making progress.

Metrics and measurements will reward, inspire, encourage or show if there are more issues (if pets are not losing or responding to reduced calorie intake, something more might be at play, course adjusted or efforts intensified). Assessing, monitoring and tracking weight for pets is not something that owners naturally and typically do – once you start down this path, it all becomes clearer and the challenge more manageable.

Weekly and daily regimens and portion-control, reduced calories Monitor daily, weekly and monthly (get a feeding journal going and make notes in there regarding food type, intake, amount of water, time spent eating/drinking, activity level, weight recordings). Patterns will become visible and you will spot trends, issues, difficulties (like slipping that occasional treat more often than you thought, or by more members of the same household), which does not help your pet lose the weight of course!

Too rapid weight loss might also be detrimental to a pet's health. Gradual, slower loss, for good is better than shedding pounds quickly and not in a healthy fashion. For obese or overweight, pets at risk, the vet should be checking them every 3, 6, 9 to 1 year, as they go

through this transition and adjustment period of losing the excess weight, without risking their health.

It is important that pets stay hydrated throughout the day and through this process as some may experience increased need for fluids, thirst etc.

- *A top pet/dog-priority: Balanced life: Getting and staying fit*

Getting and staying healthy are the new owner, pet pact that you must have and take issue with. Correctly getting out daily, moving around, playing, having fun is critical to get those bones and muscles doing what they were designed to optimally do! MOVE!

Burning stored fat and reducing the calories, expending energy, through healthy diet and exercise is the holistic approach propagated and advocated for here.

- *Does your pet get regular exercise?*
- *Does your pet have stamina and can go the distance when challenged? (some obese pets have trouble breathing and even moving for short distances)*
- *How can you go about to avoid over-exertion, fatigue, risk of injury – safety first!*
- *How much exercise should my pet be getting?*
- *How to you plan to execute and deliver on these goals, through daily activities?*
- *What breed, type, size and age, fitness level does your pet have at the present moment?*
- *What goals and targets for fitness, weight are/can be realistically set and achieved in the next week, month, year?*

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Toys, props, play-structures, places to roam free, move around, climb, run, play, chase, roll around, hide and socialize are all essential parts of this strategy and approach. See how creatively you can make these available (both indoors and out).

Types of exercise include

- Climbing, jumping, over and under obstacles
- Free play and open space
- Fun-time with owner, fooling around
- Hide-and-seek
- Movement and motion
- Play in dog or local park
- Playing
- Props and gadget play
- Running
- Sightseeing, socializing
- Walking
- Being involved in family activities
- Rollerblading, wagon-rides, stroller-rides, biking, accompanying you to the store, pet store for example, rounds and errands, doing laundry, raking leaves etc. Make them an integral part of the family and neighborhood activities and you will soon have a more balanced pet and healthier lifestyle beyond daily walks to do business! (bare minimum).

Injury might prevent your animal from going all out, but most would welcome the opportunity to interact, get attention and doing something. Laziness and boredom, sedentary lifestyle are all contributing to larger, overweight animals. With the minimum effort and intervention – time for play and activity everyday can turn the tide quickly. Again, if you stick with it and have a plan, the weight will simply melt off in the process. It is about more than a thin, skinny,

trim, athletic pet – it is about their health, happiness, full-rounded, all-round well-being and longevity too, their quality of life, enjoyment, fun, time with you, tender loving care. There is more at play here – LITERALLY!

- *During Illness*

When your body feels down and out, not quite up to it, or you are not yourself, healing from surgery, recovering from illness, or just sick, exercise is and might be the last thing on your mind. It might also put you at increased risk of injury or put undue strain on your heart, break your immune system down even further. In some cases, vet will recommend pets NOT engaging in any additional activity (hurt, ill or healing). Obese or severely overweight, extreme cases of excess weight, where pressure on the limb or bone, might put them at risk of injury, breakage or loss, safety or health concerns, there are other alternatives and therapies, exercise equipment to rectify and get you going. Extreme care has to be taken under these circumstances for any type of movements or increased activity.

Comfort and safety have to figure into your plan as well. You do not want to over-expose, exert, tire or fatigue, put your pet at increased risk either. Fun, engaging activities are the best. Time spent together makes it easier to invite, entice, encourage pets to come out and play, move around and 'exercise' – without them even realizing it is happening. It needs to be less of a chore, more of a fun thing to do, for them to stick to it and participate willingly, freely and often, again and again!

Only exercise when advisable and safe, not painful, there is no injury, illness or disease, medical condition involved. Fatigue and health problems need to be monitored as well.

### **SECTION 3: A HOLISTIC, COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO BALANCED EATING, EXERCISE AND LIFESTYLE FOR PETS**

▪ *NEW PRIORITIES: Making pet-eating, nutrition, meals, treats part of a healthy balanced day, week, getting out, about and around*  
Finding things that you and your pet can do and engage each other in together has to be and become part of your daily and normal routines. More of what should be happening, naturally, made time for, than a chore and have to do. Integrated approaches seem to get more traction and be more effective.

Just allow it to unfold, do not make a big deal out of it. Consistency and frequency, regular repetition, make it almost second nature and the more fun it is (as we have seen so far), the more likely pets are to participate willingly in these activities.

Pets are not necessarily unwilling participants, they are just not used to having to do these things or being allowed to have FUN in new ways. The more you create the space, opportunity and invitation to play, join in, the more they will! It really is that simple. If you choose to stick with it, your reward will be worth its weight in gold! If there is very little interest in these activities or exercise, you might have to get down on all fours, invite, encourage, stroke, tease, exercise with them to get them started. If disinterest continues, get help from the professionals and assess if it could be a symptom of deeper lying issues (digestive problems, muscular, skeletal etc. ) that you are unaware of. Aching joints in older pets for example, pregnant pets might just not have the energy and stamina in the gestation phases or rapid growth of the puppies. Be realistic in your expectations and know your pets limits too!

Infuse these activities with variety and shared moments with you – that is a great, irresistible invite for most pets – getting to spend time

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with their owners, getting love and attention, care and interaction a great bonus. It asks for a paradigm shift. Once you crack through the nut of this being a chore, rather than something to build and strengthen your relationship, insight will dawn and wisdom will reveal itself to the both of you! Your friendship, partnering on this issue can unlock great secret and mystery – with the weight loss and health benefits being a great bonus! They are intertwined and link in inextricable, intriguing ways! Surprise and reward await on these fronts, so stick with it and get on with it if you have not yet done so.

Positive reinforcement can go a long way in your arsenal to your pet to not only be interested in activity, weight loss, but improving all-round health and relationship, quality of life when it comes to healthy nutrition and exercise – it takes effort, investment of time and energy, but it is worth it in the long run for both of you!

- *FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS: A new lifestyle, lifelong partnership with man's best friend*

Outdoor activity, open spaces, running room, space to call their own, both indoors, out or doors are an absolute must. Explore your neighborhood and surrounding area for some green space, where pets are welcome. Specialty pet or dog parks, walkways, even exercise areas and socializing clubs can make a big contribution and difference too.

Walks in the neighborhood, interacting with other, people and dogs (different styles, shapes, sizes, ages, gender etc. ), strangers, family, friends, younger and older people can expand your dog's skills, exposure and stimulation.

Local areas, ponds, pet parks are all options at your disposal. Going over to a neighbor, fellow pet-owners' property close by, socializing

and interacting, engaging, playing, chasing can be an important developmental tool, allowing pets to blow off steam, move around and get the exercise that they need to stay in mint condition.

Leashed or unleashed areas are possible and at your disposal – combine, vary and alternate them for best results.

Participation and interest, stimulation will be peaked. Dogs are herd, social beasts at heart and by tapping into this base instinct and need, you might be able to get better results and cooperation from your pet in the key areas that will make a difference – getting out there, burning energy, fat, calories!

Make it a priority and not just a chore. Look at it through a different set of eyes. This is not because they must (ONLY), but it fulfills a need for responsible pet-ownership and stewardship, trust and investment you are making in your companion and best-furry, four-legged friend(s)! Moving around and playing feels like less of a chore or drag when done this way! Socializing informally, structured play, getting to meet, greet and social with others good for both of you! Changing habits, learning a couple of new good ones, may just change more than you've come to expect or bargained for!

- *CHANGING HABITS FOR GOOD: Play, exercise and other Routines that help*

Losing weight needs a plan, structure, repetition, commitment, discipline, regularity, intensity, variety, fun-element, to last and succeed, give results in the short, medium, longer term, that lasts and makes a difference. Current levels of health, physique and conditioning will affect what type, how much of what, how often your pets can/should be engaging in when it comes to activity, play and exercise. 10, 20, 30 minutes, 1 hour, once or twice daily, for weeks,

months will be a tall order for some pets (obese), but not enough of a challenge (high-performance, working or breeding dogs).

Seconds to minutes of play may be exhausting or a breeze – again it will vary and need to be adjusted for every pet. Short walks might lead to fatigue, while the same route and 30 minute twice daily might not be enough to challenge and give fit dogs a work-out. Consult with your vet on what would be optimal and best-fit, advisable for your pet specifically! Safe, healthy and effective is what you need to opt for. Part of your focus has to fall on what to do effectively to keep raising the bar, by intensifying or increasing any daily exercise and activity schedules, or levels. Daily walks are great, as they come to expect them, you look forward to it, you are exercising and working towards the same goals, in tandem, full partnership, motivating and enjoying each other's company. What could be more of a positive influencer and incentive – shared, time together, tender loving care and attention, reward and exchange – what most pets and owners crave and want anyway! Embrace it and create spaces and opportunities in your everyday to allow for more of this! Climbing, navigation, training classes can all help too.

Weight loss will only happen with concerted effort, concentrated on attaining goals and targets! Gradually and slowly increasing intensity, duration and frequency will also help. Just getting started and having the discipline in place to engage in this every day is a major accomplishment.

- *PLAY, FUN, EXERCISE: Recommended Activities and Exercises*

Teaching tricks, introduction new toys, props or structures, teasers and interactive fun will invite your pet to do more, move around, explore, discover, enjoy and have a great time while doing it. They will

not even realize that they are actually working out, being active or losing weight.

Movement and motion are great ways to burn off energy, get rid of those dreaded fat stores and build lean, trim muscle, stronger bones, joints, hips etc. which will serve your pets better as they age and move through their life-cycles too.

Fetching sticks, balls, objects, running backwards and forwards, finding hidden toys, climbing, jumping, chasing, adding movement to the arsenal through structured and free play may just do the trick. If this is occurring on a regular basis you are set for success! Making them work for a treat or reward (non-food items of course OR healthy treats in moderation – or you will be undermining your own efforts again – word of caution here! SPARINGLY use treat and rewards encouraging exercise – you want to establish good habits, not bad ones! Losing weight not gaining MORE weight through bad choices or misguided efforts).

Active, moving and doing is what the optimal state of being would be for your pets. Find creative ways to make this happen more often.

- *MAKING IT WORTHWHILE: Training and Rewarding*

Focus for once on what is best for your pet specifically and deliberately. Schedule in time everyday if you have to, to give attention to what it is that will be best for them (not necessarily your own needs, but the pet's specific needs)

Encourage play and fun activities – if you do not, why should they? Pets take their exercise and activity cues and clues, invites from their owners. Isn't that a scary thought. People can give one look at your pet and see a reflection of you – eek! What are your priorities and own levels of fitness? What to they need in terms of nutrition and exercise

and how can I best provide for that (myself, get others to help with it?)

Make pets part of your life and family routines, rather than peripheral spectators or after-thoughts – that is the key here. The more they are part of family life, outings, activities in and around the house, outside play, ball in the park, errands etc. the more likely they are to have to move around, walk, run and keep up, be fitter, socialize, stick with it and less of a chore! Remind yourself of the benefits and rewards and make it less of a chore, it will make it easier to stick to, a pleasure you gladly and willingly participate in.

Incorporate your pet into the intricacies of your daily routines, morning, evening walks might not be enough! Dog-walkers and exercisers, professional care-givers, trainers, workshops and classes, pet-owner interaction support groups and local clubs, equipment, structures, regular family play in the backyard after-school are all great ways to enable this, without too much of a major upset or turmoil, interference. It is doable, if you make it a priority, plain and simple. The rest is no more than an excuse and screwed up priorities! You need to get these straightened out – it is not something your pet can do for you, but that you can do for your pet – you will both be thankful you did take/make the time!

What is the nature of your lifestyle, when it comes to exercise and fitness ? What example and priority, value do you portray to others and your pet when it comes to physical fitness? Is your attitude, inactive, sedentary lifestyle harmful to your pets? Are you and your pets overweight?

Active, balanced living and nutrition is not only good for pets, but also for their owners! Parks, catch, Frisbee, ball-play, chase, running around are all ways (even in your own backyard) that both of you can

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expend some energy, blow off some steam, even recharge and de-stress! Ever thought that this might be good for you too? Well, it definitely is, if you make and give some of your time. The rewards will just keep trickling in. Invest time in fitness and health and you will reap benefits now and for the future, for both you and your pet(s)! Allow their conditioning and needs to dictate and enable your own efforts to maintain and sustain healthy living, balance, stress-free quality of life and longevity! (for all of you!).

Become the enabler and champion of exercise, healthy eating, snacking and activity! Fun, playful activities, socializing with you, others and dogs, mental and physical stimulation will ensure overall health and wellbeing. Interaction, engaging play, variety of fun activities, alternatives, creative, imaginative fun, shared moments and attention will have your pet thriving, no matter what!

They crave it – they are social animals just like us and the trust element, you communicate you care, when you interact, play and focus on their needs for once, as opposed to selfishly going your merry way, with their companionship, on your terms, when you need it. Take a one-sided, lopsided relationship currently and empower it to 'feed' and fuel both of you, building a strong and lasting, interactive, loving healthy interaction, over time that lasts and builds memories too, while you shed the pounds and stay healthy in the process – that is the bonus here!

Toys that invite curiosity and exploration, discovery and mastery are best. They are very affordable and there is a great variety available in the marketplace, online and you can even create your own. Encourage both mind and body to partake and enjoy, have fun, move around, jump, climb, run, walk, roll around, hide, duck, reach, paw... Pet, encourage, rub, rough-house (within bounds and moderation, respectfully), scuffle, brush, bathe and make time together fun, you

will be well on your way of having a healthy, balanced pet on your hands in no time.

A variety of activities, lots of room to play and move around, even running outside, exploring, discovering and interacting with their world, others, things and even other pets around them, makes for a fuller life.

Establish routines and pattern behavior, schedule activity in, so it is less of a chore, more a part of normal living, like breathing or brushing your teeth and it will soon become second nature. What is effort today, will seem like something you cannot do without and naturally do in no time. Most will say it takes between 10-14 days to establish a new pattern of behavior (many take much longer!). See how you fare and track your progress (yes, write it down, it helps you make it a priority, believe it or not – get a fellow pet-owner to share your goal and keep motivating each other, if you find it hard to stick to, easier to give up). These efforts do start with you as the owner – you have to be the impetus and driver behind these efforts.

Other ways to make this successful:

- Ensure regular play, exercise or other physical movement
- Find exercises that work for your pet
- Work together with pet, family and household to find routines and creating plans that work for the pets and other members, plans and timetables – share the load, have fun together!
- Get a specialist pet physical trainer
- Make it a priority to lose weight or get into shape, (both you, family and pets)

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- 30 minutes, four times a week is a good rule of thumb to work up to (even 15 minutes a day, regularly, every day for a week, then a month, on-going will make a difference and have an impact!)
- Measure and track every week how you are doing and progressing along (how much, when and why you missed a day, how you plan to catch up, different variety of activities, mixing it up and keeping it fun for everyone)
- Aim for increased levels of play (duration, frequency and intensity) that you can encourage, participate and share in together. It is also about the time you get to spend together.
- Opt for the best possible activities that peak both pet and owner interests (we are more likely to engage than is the premise and rationale behind this argument and stance)

Here are just some examples to get your creative juices flowing on what to do with your pet to MOVE AROUND MORE, GET EXERCISE, REGULARLY, BE HEALTHY AND LOSE WEIGHT IN THE PROCESS:

- Encouragement, acknowledgement and sharing activities together (gardening, errands, washing the car etc. )
- Fetch, catch, chasing and having races
- Free play
- Frisbees, balls, disks, ropes and other favorite toss-toys, props and gadgets help too
- Get a good quality leash
- Jogging, running, biking, blading, skate-boarding, wagon-rides, stroller-walks
- Leased and unleashed activity and time out-of-doors
- Swimming and dipping, cooling down, chasing sticks, retrieval, from ponds and streams

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- Walks and sightseeing in the neighborhood, themed walks

Make it fun and active, keep the levels of energy and engagement high, verbal praise, petting, reward can all form part of it too!

Gage and get them interested and they are more willing and likely to partake and engage with you – that is the rule of thumb for results and success. You need to initiate, entice, tease and invite to play, move, interact. It has to start with you!

Ensure that it is almost irresistibly fun to do, tease, chase, play hide and seek, tempt, toss, get their curiosity peeked and encourage them to play, have fun and just BE! Get the heart rate and breathing up, cardio-aerobic type is best (Even for pets), to get that metabolic engine revving as high and fast as it can go, for optimal reward, impact, effect and success – translating over time, with frequency and regularity into weight loss, for good!

Intervention type services, specialist niche providers, pet exercise boot-camps (extremely obese, high-performers, breeding or working dogs, very small animals) etc. all have different needs and the industry have various branches that cater to these needs effortlessly and for a fee of course. Check your local and surrounding area business listings, advertisement boards, vet offices for these types of providers and walkers, exercisers, even camps, outings, birthday treats, occasional or regular treatments, visits, in-home or on-location, mobile or on-site/off-site, book-in type facilities, etc.

As your animal gets to higher levels of fitness, you will have to intervene again and raise the bar to get benefits and keep the weight off, improve stamina, strength and endurance for example. Needing to be physically active conditioning will bring with it increased challenge. Do it for longer periods of time or increase the intensity of what you are doing.

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Use food rewards sparingly and in moderation – find alternative methods of involving and rewarding. Rub-downs, brushings, ribbons, new toys are better than the indulgent, high-salt, protein, fiber, fat, added calorie snacks! Motivate, support them, also their efforts, without undermining it with inappropriate, unfair culinary treats. (not good for them, hard to refuse, packing on the pounds over time, counter-productive) Yes, it is hard at first, but find ways that work for the both of you!

- *REPLENISH: Rest and Hydration*

Fluids and hydration, alternating exercise with periods of rest, relaxation and replenishing moments, even resting in the shade, giving a moment while walking to catch breath are all good ways to make things more enjoyable and healthier too. Our bodies will only treat us as we treat them! Health improvements are the new priority, so we need to be kind(er), to our systems to get the most from them. Naps and good solid full night's sleep, in quiet, darkened own space, with respect for privacy is what most animals need, crave and want. (this holds especially true if there have been bouts of busy-ness and intense physical exertion or high activity levels during the day, change in routine etc.

Having hydration sources readily available throughout the day is critical as well. At the disposal of your pet, easy to reach, when they need to have a cold, clean drink necessary for their optimal health, good digestion etc. See these arrangements and routines as critical parts of overall wellness too.

- *OPTIMIZE: Environmental considerations*

Minimize the risk of injury and respect it when your pet's conditioning, medical state, energy levels are not there. This is a mutual effort and

mitigating, navigating or eliminating risks have to all form part of this equation.

Fatigue, tiring too quickly, wheezing, coughing, trouble catching breath or keeping up will need further scrutiny and medical attention even (if called for). Schedule a check-up and be sure to mention it to the vet too. Warm-ups and stops, even cool downs before, during and bouts of exercising are also important. Similar to our bodies, their tendons, muscles, bones, joints and ligaments need to be prepared and taken care of too. Always have them in your line of sight when outdoors and off-leash. Minimize slips, hits and falls, limbs bones, sprains etc.

Custom the activities to the goals and your pet's individual needs. Watch extreme weather (salt, ice, snow, rain, dry, wet leaves (slippery)), covering, apparel, sun, extreme heat etc. Balance and alternate indoor/outdoor (depending on weather, locale/area, green space availability et al).

- *SOCIALIZATION, ADJUSTMENT: Interaction with others (pets/trainers, other dogs, breeds, children, elderly etc.)*

Encouragement and interaction are key for a fully-rounded animal, healthy and balanced living all-round. New places and faces always pose a new challenge and more to learn, discover, explore and enjoy. Tap into their social side (which we do not see often enough one-on-one with them)!

Join fellow-pet-owners, volunteer clubs for walkers, trips to the park, play-dates, neighborhood outings, walks, picnics, pet-play and pamper weekends etc.

Advanced dog training classes are also a great option. Some grooming salons and vets also have interesting initiatives OR start something creative of your own accord that works for you and your pet.

- *THINKING AND DOING DIFFERENTLY GETS RESULTS: Prevention is better than cure!*

Inactivity and weight problems go hand in hand. If your schedule really does not allow for you to engage your pet in activity and shared walks, runs, play, find someone that can. There are always students, other workers, even self-employed entrepreneurs that will undertake to care for your pet in this fashion for a fee. Professional or informal arrangements can be made. Share the load with family members, but make it a priority NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT!

Optimize dog sitters and dog walkers to assist you with every aspect of this process. Keys and leashes in the entrance hall, access to food, safety can all be contracted, in writing and agreed upon before, to ensure sustaining this long-term, getting and keeping the results (even when you can not be there). If you travel extensively, are away for business a lot, these can be a true life-saver!

Throughout this discussion, it became pretty apparent that there is more than meets the eye, than slimmer and trimmer waistlines, lean muscle and strong bones, agile pets, shedding pounds or eating right!

Like choice ingredients, working together in a recipe to create the perfect culinary experience from start to finish is a good analogy here to characterize what it will take to make the most of nutrition and feeding secrets for dog-lovers, pet owners and pet that choose to engage in this fashion and go boldly down this path. What are you creating and enjoying together?

Maintenance and sustaining change are also critical in your efforts. You need to take a different approach NOT only for the short-term, but also MORE longer-term! Health and wellness is a much broader topic

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than nutrition, food, exercise and routines. It is a total care package. A holistic approach to pet-care, loving attention and tender loving care, including feeding, reward, nutrition that works for your pet, his/her body, needs, interests, health, well-being, wellness, quality of life, relationships and longevity!

- Assessment and monitoring of overall health.
- Life-stage
- Protection
- Ongoing tracking and progress, interest and champion for/of their best overall conditioning, medical, physical, social, emotional – parts and whole!
- Adjust, be flexible and creative in coming up with answers and solutions that work for you and your pet!

Obesity, illness, disease, genetics, excuses, it does not matter – the buck stops here and things have to change, keep on changing and has to all be for the better – as the owner, champion and advocate of/for your pet's best interest, you need to enable impetus, improvement, establish, change bad habits into good habits and sustain healthy, balanced living.

Whether you are caught up in correction, prevention, intervention or maintenance, there are lots to do and get done, on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis. From spending time with your pet every day, special moments, treasured, shared, scheduled, planned/unplanned, structured/informal, one-on-one, outdoors, indoors, play, fun, activities together, smaller portion sizes, less treats... whatever the case may be – some, any or all of the above – THINGS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME! That is the only guarantee. See the world through the eyes of your pet for a change and you will be better able to serve and cater to what their needs and wellness requires of both of you!

It does not have to be difficult and/or overwhelming either! Improve, Maintain and ENJOY! That is the path to success and results.

▪ **THE LAST WORD: Closing Final thoughts**

Overweight, obese or troubled, at-risk pets, illness, disease, inactive, aging, recovering animals, all have differing needs. Gender, age, breed, weight, fitness level, life and limb all hang in a delicate balance and intricate interplay of related factors and dynamics. It is up to owners to decode, decipher and make the most of it!

YOU CAN DO A LOT TO SAFE-GUARD, SAVE, IMPROVE AND ENSURE HEALTHY, QUALITY LIFE FOR YOUR PET! IT STARTS WITH YOU, TODAY, HERE AND NOW...!

What you do, choose (not choose/do), will impact the life, health and wellbeing of your pet (surprised? ) Attention, monitoring health, feeding, giving and allowing exercise, shared moments, attention, reward, love and care all fall in your realm of control.

Combination of a healthy diet and good exercise are the ways, channels and means to improve, uplift and guarantee a high quality of life, existence and satisfying well-being, co-existing with you, their owner and care-giver. What have you done, or plan to do for them now, soon, today, tomorrow, the weekend, next week? This is just one example of how to change the way you look at their needs? Through their eyes and interests, not yours!

If does not even have to cost an arm and a leg to do so! You can start today, without delay, get others to help you, reconnect with your animal of choice and furry four-legged friend. (stop treating them like spectators, afterthoughts or peripheral nice-to-haves).

SO TO SUMMARIZE AND CONCLUDE (FOR NOW)... (**FIVE THINGS TO GO AND DO RIGHT NOW!!**)

1. Whole, natural food diets and balanced nutrition CAN AND DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE
2. Making active living and increased levels of daily exercise and activity a top priority
3. Socializing and getting out into the world, sharing moments with your pets and others (like the social beings we are!) can have significant impact on overall benefits and quality of life – it is a truly rewarding experience, very little else can touch or even come close to!
4. Partner with your vet and treatment collaborators and create a support network of trust around you and your pet – again putting their interests front and center!
5. Map out, determine, plan, stock and enact nutritional and caloric intake, choices, options, quantities, preparations, serving etc. ensuring it all addresses their best interest and your specific, individual animal's needs. (no one-size fits all solutions will be good enough anymore!). Get out there and get active!