



HOW DO I CHOOSE A HEALTHY DOG FOOD?

Below is Bonnie's response to a question posted on the Yahoo Answers site:

Best Answer - Chosen by Asker

I would say a healthy dog food follows the rules for the main criteria that I look for in a food, which are these:

1 - If the source meat is listed as a whole meat (like "Lamb" or "Chicken") it should be quickly followed by a meal (with source meat, i.e. specific kind of meat like "Lamb meal", NOT "meat meal"). This is because the ingredients are listed by weight, and a "whole meat" has heavy water weight - so you don't want to see the next ingredient be grain, before you see "meal" - meal being a protein source with the water weight removed.

2 - No meat by-products ("by-products" can contain chicken beaks & feet, lamb or beef hooves, poultry feathers, etc which are *not quality protein sources* but *will increase* the total protein % of the food's analysis)

3 - Specifically sourced fat or oil, i.e. NOT "crude fat", which comes from rendering companies and is a pretty gross product when you research it. Instead the fat source should either be vegetable oil (like sunflower oil) and/or a specific meat source of fat, like "chicken fat".

Typically, if a food follows these 3 criteria, **they have formulated the most expensive part of the manufacturing process correctly, and as a general rule of thumb, you have a quality food.** This is MY opinion, based on information I have mostly learned via The Whole Dog Journal, which can also give you much more in depth and specific breakdown of food quality. (I have only found **ONE** food that meets this criteria in a grocery store - Newman's Own - so a general rule of thumb is also that you will need to buy your food at a pet specialty store to get healthy quality.) IT IS IMPORTANT to know a list of criteria like this so you can identify a quality food because probably **just as important as a quality food is your practice of REGULARLY changing the food you feed** every several months. It is NOT a good practice to feed the same product, continually, for years. THAT is the one of the primary causes of food allergies.

Other people who are more educated on this than me, will also get into the actual manufacturing practices of food companies, specifically where (what country) they source the meat or ingredients, etc. But there is one thing you can remember when you go down that path of specificity: Our domestic dogs are descended from garbage eaters (they are descended from the same ANCESTORS of wolves, but they are not descended from wolves as we know them today - Ray Coppinger's book - DOGS). They became domesticated by eating at the village garbage dumps - and they have survived for centuries eating scraps, AND grain products, and raw bones, etc. They are much less fragile then today's current conversation on pet food would have us believe.

Personally, my own dogs get a breakfast of raw joint bones (chicken, duck or turkey necks) and a dinner of any one of a half dozen kibble that follow my criteria above, mixed with some home-made cooked ground meat and brown rice. Healthy, clean teeth, no food allergies = success. But I also had an afghan hound back in the 80's - 90's before I knew better, that lived to the age of 18 eating nothing but Blue Seal dog food, which is little more than corn meal.

Bottom line, educate yourself (the Whole Dog Journal is a great place to start), then make an informed choice, and RELAX.

Source(s):

Whole Dog Journal

Ray Coppinger's book: Dogs

I have 40+ years as a breeder, trainer, exhibitor, boarding kennel owner, grooming shop owner, dog professional, owner of Healthy Dog LLC

Asker's Rating:

***** **Asker's Comment:** Thank you! This is a great and informative answer that I know I will be referring back too.