



The Best of Both Worlds: How to combine processed kibbles and canned products with freshly prepared foods to address changing nutritional needs of geriatric dogs.

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Categories of Pet Foods:

1. Processed foods: kibble, canned food.
2. Home-made foods: freshly prepared meats, whole grains, and vegetables.
3. Raw foods (BARF diet): uncooked ground meat/bone, usually including organ meat and vegetable/fiber (Primal, Jeffrey's, Small Batch), whole raw foods (poultry necks/back, oxtail), organ meats (gizzards, tripe, heart, liver).
4. Dehydrated foods (Stella&Chewies, Honest Kitchen).

Problems with Processed Foods:

- kibble: dry/dehydrating, starchy (plaque producing), at least 50% flour (relatively high caloric density/glycemic index leading to blood glucose rollercoaster)
- canned foods: not dehydrating (70% moisture content), but all other drawback of processed foods apply.

Quick fixes:

- re-hydrate: add water, low salt broth, coconut water, etc; up to 50:50 mix with kibble
- add finely chopped or steamed veggies to reduce caloric density/glycemic index
- add yogurt/live cultures sources to provide/improve gut flora (probiotics)
- add other protein and whole foods (cottage cheese, gizzards, meat chunks) to engage teeth and decrease glycemic index.

Homemade Diets:

- time consuming, but can be used as additive for processed foods.
- simple meat/veggie stews can make a great topping for kibble or canned food, and actually improve nutritional value of the meal as a whole.
- beef (15-20% fat content) and broccoli—for dry dogs with dandruff, weak coat/excess shedding, dry feet, brittle/weak nails, back pain, tendon/ligament issues
- chicken and carrots/sweet potato—for cold dogs with weak digestion, anorexia, loose stools, frequent colitis
- turkey (2-7% fat content) or white fish and peas—for warm or hot-running dogs

Balancing the Recipe:

- fortify with essential nutrients as needed according to patient's needs and ongoing health issues:

-Calcium: add 3 grams (3000 mg) to each pound (lb) of ground muscle meat (Animal Essentials Seaweed Calcium Carbonate, 3g/TBS)

-Basic B's (multi-vitamin/micronutrients): SP Whole Body Support, Animal Essentials Multivitamins, VS Canine Plus, Dr Pitcairn's Healthy Powder, etc

-Digestive Aides: probiotics, digestive enzymes (Animal Essentials Plant Enzymes/ Probiotics, VS Fast Balance, VS Probiotic chews)

-Essential Fatty Acids (EFA's): Omega-3 supplements (Nordic Naturals), liver, avocado, eggs, canned sardines/fresh fish, plant oils (coconut, flax, safflower)

-joint/connective tissue support (VS Glycoflex, SP Musculoskeletal Support), natural anti-inflammatory support (Pain Plus, SP Boswellia, Chinese herbals)

-other glandular tonics with organ-specific micronutrients (Standard Process Cardiac, Renal, Hepatic, Adrenal, Enteric Support)

-anti-oxidants (SP Wheat Germ Oil, VIT E/Selenium), immune support (SP Immune), power mushrooms (CAS Options)

-Chinese herbals (based on specific TCM pattern/diagnosis).

Nutritional data sources: ndb.nal.usda.gov, balanceit.com, nutritiondata.self.com

Raw Foods:

-pre-made/ready to serve grinds: Jeffrey's, Primal, Small Batch, etc

-great to feed to most dogs as a stand-alone diet (especially young, hot-running, energetic dogs with strong digestion)

-can be used as part of diet:

a. cooling/anti-inflammatory meal to cool hot/inflamed pets for the night

b. can be lightly steamed and added to processed foods as described above

-whole foods (chicken/turkey/duck necks and backs, gizzards/tripe, heart, trachea): very helpful at removing dental tartar in young healthy dogs who have not developed dental lesions yet (periodontitis, root infections/abscesses), but not practical for pets already experiencing dental discomfort or ones who lost too many teeth.

Selecting the right type of food for your dog:

-feed warming foods in the morning, cooling foods in the evening

-feed warming foods when patient seems cold, shivering, seeking warm/soft places, or is weak/sick

-feed cooling foods when it's warm or if patient is running hot, panting, drinking/urinating excessively, seeking cool places to rest

-relative 'heat' in food, in decreasing order: HOT > dry kibble > canned foods > home made diets with starches > home-made diets without starches > raw foods > COLD

-when things don't work well (GI upset: vomiting, loose stools, etc): return to the simplest diet, or feed bland diet for 2-3 days until GI function back to 100%

-sample Bland Diet: 60-80% well cooked starch or porridge: 20-40% lean protein, plenty of broth/moisture, small frequent meals/avoid overfeeding.

-use coating agents (Fast Balance GI, RX Clay, Slippery Elm, Marshmallow) and antacids as needed to recover gut quickly.