

Information Sheet – Feeding Raw Bones to Dogs and Cats

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Bones are nature's teeth cleaner for dogs and cats. They are high in natural and digestible calcium and other minerals, they provide roughage in the diet, and are a source of essential amino acids, enzymes, essential fatty acids and fat soluble vitamins. They are excellent for satisfying the chewing urge and giving dental exercise including gum massage and aiding in plaque removal.

Important Feeding Pointers

- **Bones must always be fed raw.** Cooked bones can splinter and cause digestive complications.
- Try to pick size appropriate bones for your dog's mouth and teeth.
- Think of your dog's age and state of the teeth, and also how they consume bones. Softer bones such as chicken may be more suitable for younger puppies and older dogs. Dogs who gulp bones should be provided with larger sized bones that they need to chew up before swallowing.
- Different types of bones have different bone to meat ratio, and therefore calcium to phosphorus ratio. It is important that pets get the correct ratio in their diet. This is a good reason to vary the type of bones you give your dogs. The chart below shows some examples.
- Different bones also require different muscles and teeth to consume them, another reason to vary the types of bones fed.

Item choice	Bone percentage
Chicken neck without skin	75% bone
Chicken carcass	60% bone
Chicken feet	60% bone
Duck feet	60% bone
Chicken wing	46% bone
Lamb ribs	45% bone
Pork ribs	45% bone
Chicken back	44% bone
Turkey neck	42% bone
Chicken neck with skin	36% bone
Turkey wing	33% bone
Chicken quarter	28% bone
Chicken leg	27% bone
Chicken thigh	21% bone
Turkey leg	17% bone

Source: Ridyard, A (2011) *The Dogs Dinner*, Raw Feeding for Dogs <http://dogsdinner2.webs.com/anyoldbone.htm>

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How Much Bone?

Typically, dogs need about 10% bone in their daily diet. This can go as high as 20% and as low as 5%, it depends on the dog. For example, one of my dogs weighs 30kg. She eats approximately 2.5% of her bodyweight per day (this is slightly higher than maintenance of 2%), which is 750grams. She therefore needs about 75 grams of bone per day. So if I fed her a turkey neck that weighed 170grams, the bone percentage is approximately 72 grams (see chart above), so we're right on the money. It is important to note here that balance occurs over time when feeding a raw diet (this is how nature intended!), and you don't have to feed a bone every day. You can feed bones every day, just vary them and make sure you aren't feeding too much. A little bit of bone goes a long way!

Dogs weight x % fed per day = daily food allowance

Total food allowance x 10% = amount of bone

Daily Food Allowance*

- Maintenance 2-3%
- Weight gain/active dogs 2.5-3.5%
- Weight loss/inactive dogs 1.5-2.5%
- Working/high energy/lactating 3-4%
- Puppy 10% of current weight (monitor and adjust % down depending on puppy)

*All dogs are different. This is intended as a guide only. Daily food allowance depends on age, activity, breed and individual. Look at your dog's body condition regularly. You should be able to feel the ribs, not see them, and not have to dig in to find them!

What Sort of Bones?

Types of raw bones available at supermarkets, butchers, specialty butchers and specialty pet supply stores include:

Chicken – Frame/back, wing, neck, feet, leg, leg quarter, bone in breast

Turkey – Frame, neck, wing, leg

Duck – Frame, wing, neck

Rabbit – whole

Lamb – Flap/breast, neck, shank,

Beef – Brisket, leg (marrow bone)

Pork – Brisket, ribs, head, trotter (fresh not smoked/dried) Note: Pork can be fatty

Goat – Ribs/brisket

Kangaroo – Tail

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And some more boutique offerings:

Quail

Poussin/Spatchcock

Weight Bearing Bones – A Word of Caution

These are the leg bones of the animals and include: lamb shank, turkey leg, chicken leg, marrow bone (beef). Typically these bones are very hard (weight bearing), so are not suitable for all dogs. They do have a tendency to splinter, so I don't feed them at all. However, I know some people who feed them regularly with no problems. Again, each dog is different.

Bones for Cats

- Chicken wings (wing tips for kittens!) and necks
- Rabbit pieces
- Quails
- Baby chicks

If your cat isn't used to eating raw food, this is a great guide to get you started: <http://feline-nutrition.org/nutrition/how-to-transition-your-cat-to-a-raw-diet>

Bones for Small Dogs (e.g. Chihuahua, Pomeranian, Maltese)

- Chicken wings and necks
- Chicken carcasses (small)
- Rabbit pieces
- Quails
- Small sections of brisket and ribs

Bones for Medium Dogs (e.g. Beagle, Border Collie)

- Chicken wings, necks, carcass
- Small turkey necks and wings
- Small duck necks and wings
- Rabbit pieces
- Brisket, ribs and flaps
- Small Kangaroo tails

Bones for Large Dogs (e.g. Labrador, German Shepherd)

- Chicken wings, necks, carcass
- Rabbit (whole or half)
- Brisket, ribs and flaps

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- Kangaroo tails
- Turkey necks, wings and carcass
- Duck necks, wings and carcass

Sources in Brisbane

- Your local supermarket will usually have chicken wings, frames, necks, turkey necks, pork ribs (expensive!). Keep an eye out for specials. *Note: I do NOT recommend buying the pre-packaged bags of beef or lamb bones in supermarkets. Most of them are very fatty and usually backbones, or very hard bone, so unless your dog is super great at consuming any type of bone, I would steer clear
- West Moreton Pet Foods (Ipswich) has a range of pork, kangaroo, turkey, chicken and beef bones (07) 3281 1277
- Chew Chomp and Chill. A great supplier of ethically sourced bones from The Complete Pet Company including lamb, chicken, kangaroo and turkey.
<http://www.chewchompandchill.com.au/>
- Sherwood Road Organic Butcher (Chicken and lamb)
<http://www.sherwoodrdorganics.com.au/>
- Instincto has a range of kangaroo, chicken, turkey, duck and beef.
<https://rawpetfoods.com.au/>
- Ausco Foods has a range of goat, lamb, chicken and kangaroo.
http://www.auscofoods.com.au/index.php?page_id=51

*There are many more specialty butchers and other butchers who will have a good supply of quality bones. Please comment below if you have a great butcher so others can visit them too.

The more people we have out there feeding their dogs and cat a raw natural diet, the better!

Important Points to Remember About Feeding Bones to Your Pets:

- Bones should always be fed RAW
- Feed size appropriate bones for your dog or cat
- Vary the type of bone you supply
- Avoid too much bone in the diet
- Bones alone are not a balanced diet for a dog or cat. If you would like more information about a complete natural diet for your pets, contact us at www.pawsitiveconnection.com.au

Your pets will love you for feeding them yummy, healthy raw bones!