

Lunch Pinch

What to feed Fido when the cupboard is bare.

By **Lucy Postins**

It happens to the best of us; we mean to order dog food but the cupboard runs bare. Once in a while, Fido must be fed 100 percent homemade (even if he doesn't enjoy the delights of people food every day). How can you accomplish this with minimal upset?

Ideally, if you can match up one or two ingredients from Fido's regular fare with some foods from your own kitchen, the risk of any gastro-intestinal disturbance will be minimal. For example, if your bag or box of dog food lists chicken, barley, carrots, potatoes and oats among the first few ingredients and you have some chicken breasts in the freezer along with some instant oatmeal with your breakfast cereals, those would be a great place to start.

If Fido isn't accustomed to raw, this probably isn't the best time to embark on a raw feeding protocol; lightly poach or bake the chicken and cook the oatmeal according to the package instructions. Don't be tempted to feed any sort of cooked bones at all, ever. The introduction of raw bones (except for a recreational marrow-bone treat) should probably be saved for another day unless Fido is already used to these as part of his usual food routine.


Just as when we make a meal for ourselves, it's important that an emergency preparation for Fido contain a well-balanced array of food types. Of course you can't feed what you don't have, but in an ideal world, a generous portion of meat along with some carbohydrates (whole rolled grains or even mashed white or sweet potatoes) can be accented by some fresh or frozen veggies such as chopped string beans or some steamed, sliced zucchini.

Fruit probably isn't necessary, but a little unsweetened applesauce might make an already memorable homemade lunch for Fido into an even more memorable treat. If you're short on meat, then some eggs or a little plain cottage cheese can be used to increase the



protein content of your homemade meal.

If Fido is prone to GI upset at the slightest switch in food, there are some things you can add to the food to help reduce any adverse consequences. A tablespoon or two of plain, live-culture yogurt (depending on your dog's size) will work wonders. The good bacteria in live yogurt help to replenish those that naturally occur in the GI tract, thus facilitating digestion and reducing the risk of diarrhea. If you have some digestive enzymes in powdered or capsule form, these would also be a great addition to an impromptu meal (and can also be fed any time you are changing foods or introducing new things). Failing that, a little unsweetened canned pumpkin can work wonders to settle the tummy and stave off a bout of diarrhea.

Keep in mind also that in a worst-case scenario, except where certain underlying medical conditions exist, the vast majority of dogs will be absolutely fine if they skip one meal provided they have access to plenty of fresh clean water. Many pet owners fast their raw-fed pets routinely by choice, and in the wild, it's quite normal for dogs to go longer periods without food. When the other choice is a meal of BHT-laden hotdogs and buns, or a drive-thru hamburger, a fast might just be the lesser of two evils, where Fido is concerned. 

ROAD RULES

If you're out on the road and in a pinch, you may have to rely on an even more limited selection of Fido-friendly food ingredients from your RV's fridge. If you can make it to a convenience store to stock up, here is an easy meal that can be procured almost anywhere. It's not ideal, but it can work in an emergency!

Protein

Ground beef or failing that, the least salty and most natural-looking lunch meat you can find (or eggs).

Carbohydrates

A box of instant or quick-cook white rice (or some plain cornflakes or bran flakes as a last resort).

Vegetables

A bag of frozen peas or baby carrots, if veggies are available (grated, especially for smaller dogs to avoid choking).