

Too much of a good thing can bore the most refined canine.

# The **Spice** of Life

Did you know that Fido can benefit from dietary variety just as humans do?

By Lucy Postins

**V**arietal or rotational feeding is gaining popularity among pet parents. Its roots lie firmly based in both common sense and respect for what's biologically appropriate for Fido. Even though a human could survive on one brand of breakfast cereal every day for the long term, her state of health would likely be far inferior compared to a fellow human who consumed lots of different, fresh foods every week. Domestic mammals such as dogs and cats are no different in that regard.

Not only is varietal feeding important from the standpoint of preventing boredom, it also helps to ensure that Fido will receive a broader spectrum of nutrition, including enzymes, amino acids and antioxidants, compared with when he eats one single processed food every day.

Many pet food manufacturers caution pet owners not to add anything to their products, claiming that doing so will throw off the balance of nutrients. But a modern, domestic canine's digestive system is not so primitive that it cannot handle a varied diet.

As variety is introduced to the diet, so the

## **ROTATIONAL FEEDING IS GAINING POPULARITY AMONG PET PARENTS.**

body becomes more robust, and even more able to derive benefit from new, fresh ingredients. A varied diet strengthens the system, which over time means Fido is able to enjoy more and more variety, just as a monotonous, non-varied diet weakens the system and can result in a dog who can't enjoy different foods because his tummy gets upset. Start off very gradually and work up to a more varied diet over a period of weeks or months.

Of course, as with most things, common sense should prevail—heaping piles of ground beef on top of a high-protein kibble isn't a wise choice, but a mix of different foods offered throughout the week supplies a plethora of valuable compounds not present in one kibble alone.

## **Just the Facts**

A varietal diet usually incorporates some fresh produce contains pigments—colorful hues of green, orange, yellow, red and purple—which, when included in Fido's diet, provide valuable compounds like leucine (green) carotenoids (orange), zeaxanthin (yellow) and lycopene (red) with powerful antioxidant properties. Color is a key component in identifying the nutritional integrity of food.

When produce is cooked under extreme heat and pressure (as is used to make kibble), the natural, colorful pigments are destroyed and the end product turns brown. Food that is brown lacks life and vibrancy, and thus, is lacking in many of the compounds a body needs to stay healthy.

Just because dogs and cats have been domesticated and live with us in houses doesn't mean they don't have an innate, physiological need for a varied colorful, healthy whole diet just like their wild counterparts.

## **The Allergy Question**

The long-term effects of feeding a highly processed, monotonous diet can lead to various health problems, and there is growing evidence that failing to vary what Fido eats can actually predispose him to the onset of food allergies. Eating nothing but lamb and rice for years on end is not only boring but increases the risk that he will start to become intolerant of lamb or rice or both.

While some conventional vets actually recommend feeding only one type of food for years on end to help keep the options open when an allergy develops, this doesn't conform to a holistic approach to health. Pets who enjoy variety are less likely to develop allergies anyway, because their systems are much stronger; and even if they do, there are so many good quality options available that there's certainly something Fido can eat even if a food sensitivity does flare up later in life.

How Does Varietal Feeding Work? Feeding Fido a varied diet can be as involved and labor-intensive as completely preparing all food from scratch and making each meal a little different from the

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY ISTOCK/CJP

**FROM PAGE 35 | SAVING SHILOH** family is blessed by a dog that makes them laugh each and every day. Their newest family member has also become a constant companion to the finicky senior, Mitaine.

Though Shiloh's past makes the family sad, they also know that every living creature, having lived long enough, will experience hard times. They take solace in knowing that there are no more sad times for Shiloh. He is destined to live the remainder of his life safely in the loving arms of his family.

The Legers firmly believe that Shiloh came to them for a purpose. Andrea Leger lost her son back in 1995. For the first time in 15 years, she looked forward to the holidays, something she fully attributes to Shiloh and his presence in her family's life.

In Andrea's own words, "I thought I was rescuing Shiloh, but I realize he has rescued me from a deep sadness that has become gratefulness for having such a great friend...my best buddy Shiloh!"

If you are planning to share your home with a dog, please consider adopting an adult dog. So many dogs need good homes, and rescue dogs expect nothing and appreciate everything. 

**FROM PAGE 28 | THE SPICE OF LIFE** next to simply adding in some fresh and healthy, human-grade extras with his usual daily fare. Or, a varied diet can be as easy as following a schedule of rotation between different brands of commercial food.


If you take the home-prepared approach, it is important to ensure that you feed a wide enough selection of biologically appropriate foods to provide adequate levels of nutrition over a period of time, such as one week. It's true that some individual meals will contain higher levels of nutrients than others, but this isn't problematic if a common sense approach is followed and nutritional balance is accomplished during the course of a week. This requires a basic understanding of the nutritional makeup of various types of foods as well as an appreciation for how wild dogs and cats eat, including consumption of different prey such as rabbits, mice and birds and foraging for seeds and berries according to what's available. Fresh and minimally processed foods contain colorful pigments, which indicate



the presence of different nutrients.

If you feed a commercial product as a base, you can still add in your own fresh foods to provide extra taste and nutrition as well as help prevent boredom. Try mixing in some of these ingredients along with your pet's regular meals: ground or cubed meat (raw or cooked), raw (not cooked) meaty bones, plain yogurt, cottage cheese, eggs, kefir, fruits, herbs and vegetables.

Dietary variety can also be accomplished by rotating between different brands or types of commercial food. Combining raw meats and kibble is not recommended because these foods digest at different rates and can increase the risk of food borne illness, but many pet owners will feed raw for one meal and kibble the next, or use a middle-ground type of food such as dehydrated or freeze-dried and mix it with canned, kibble or raw foods in rotation.

Each dog is a unique individual and may have specific taste preferences or food tolerances. Start introducing a varietal diet gradually to allow him time to adjust and pay attention to which types of foods he does best on. Over time, the benefits of a varied feeding protocol that consists of fresh and minimally processed whole foods will become evident through more robust health, energy levels and resistance to illness. 

*Lucy Postins is a companion animal nutritionist and founder of The Honest Kitchen in San Diego, California. More nutritional resources are available at [Thehonestkitchen.com](http://Thehonestkitchen.com).*

## SOLUTIONS FROM PAGES 12 & 14

### CROSSWORD

R	O	S	S		L	O	V	E		M	A	N	G	Y
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### ANAGRAM

Airedale	Chinook
Beagle	Golden Retriever
Collie	Greyhound
Boston terrier	Hovawart
Spaniel	Irish terrier

Crossword & Anagram by Myles Meller  
[www.themecrosswords.com](http://www.themecrosswords.com)

### FETCH THE TRUTH

**You Oughta See Fido Parallel Park**

**False.**

The dog did this but ended up running over part of his owner's body before the truck was stopped.

Source: [associatedcontent.com/article/5519576/weird\\_cat\\_and\\_dog\\_news.html?cat=9](http://associatedcontent.com/article/5519576/weird_cat_and_dog_news.html?cat=9)

**The Dog Ate Your What?**

**True.**

Source: [travel.usatoday.com/hotels/post/2010/11/hotel-vacation-nightmare-dog-eats-passport/132057/1](http://travel.usatoday.com/hotels/post/2010/11/hotel-vacation-nightmare-dog-eats-passport/132057/1)

**Maybe He Wanted First Class?**

**True.**

Source: [blog.FIDOfriendly.com/hot-topic/dog-bite-in-flight-need-not-ground-fido-forever/](http://blog.FIDOfriendly.com/hot-topic/dog-bite-in-flight-need-not-ground-fido-forever/)

**"Wire" We're on the Topic of Flying**

**True.**

Source: [foxnews.com/story/0,2933,481476,00.html](http://foxnews.com/story/0,2933,481476,00.html)

**Have an Ice Day**

**False.**

The dog did not cause this. The car did sink but the owner left a locked car running on frozen ice, hence the accident.

Source: [forthe love of the dog blog.com/article/just-a-dog-story/weird-news-one-dog-grounds-a-plane-another-sinks-a-car](http://forthe love of the dog blog.com/article/just-a-dog-story/weird-news-one-dog-grounds-a-plane-another-sinks-a-car)