

## How much food should I feed my dog?

This question is more complex than can be answered in a few short sentences however it is a common query asked of veterinarians. The answer doesn't come from a set of tables in a text book because many variables affect how much food dogs need. The variables include things like the dogs breed, age, sex, how much exercise they receive, the climate, how often they are fed and the types of food provided. Also included in this list will be the dog's metabolism, if they have any dietary requirements associated with illness, if they are at their optimum weight or are over fat or over trim.

Generally speaking most dogs who are fed commercially prepared foods will be fed at least once daily. These foods can be well balanced nutritionally and we can easily fall into the habit of providing the same amount day after day of the same food. An alternative to this practice would be to supplement these commercial foods with a mixture of fresh foods including raw meat, bones, vegetables, eggs and some grain and legumes. No single food item should ever become the main part of your dogs diet except perhaps the meaty bones. Preferably most of the diet should be raw. So how much of these foods? It is worthwhile determining for your dog roughly his or hers optimum body weight. If you are not sure ask your vet. It is this optimum weight you should be striving to maintain in your dog throughout their life. The dog should be fed whatever is necessary including amount, how often and what type of food to keep them looking healthy and at this preferred weight.

If they are losing weight and this weight loss is not associated with illness or worms they they can be fed more food, more often and perhaps foods with higher calories eg fats and oils or extra protein eg milk and eggs until their weight improves.

If they are too heavy then foods of lower calories or less of the them eg foods rich in fibre eg vegetables will be the answer.

Remember we should consider the influence of exercise and the climatic conditions especially if you have an outdoor dog. These general rules are a guide only and more specific advice can be provided by your veterinarian. If we use some common sense we can avoid the health issues associated with dogs becoming obese including arthritis, diabetes and heart disease.