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Meatless Meals for Cats and Dogs

If you have been feeding your companion animals commercial pet foods, you may be jeopardizing their health. Supermarket pet foods are often composed of ground-up parts of animals deemed by Agriculture Department inspectors unfit for human consumption. The flesh of animals who fall into one of the categories of the four D's – dead, dying, diseased, or disabled – is what often goes into pet food. Many of these animals have died of infections, dehydration, or exposure to extreme heat or cold. In all but a few states, it is legal to remove unusable parts from chickens and sell them to pet food manufacturers. For example, some cheap or generic kibble-type dog food contains ground-up feathers. In the chicken inspection lines, deformed or tumorous legs are often cut off and put in a separate area for nonhuman consumption. Also, most pet foods contain the same hormones, pesticides, and antibiotics that are found in commercial meat products for humans. If you are concerned about your companion animals' health and about the cruelties of the meat industry, now is the time to stop buying meat-based pet food.

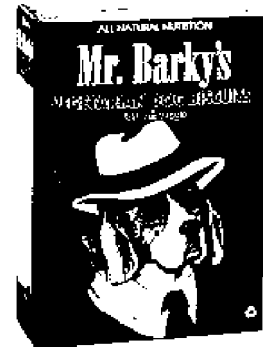
Vegetarian Dogs and Cats

Many vegetarians and vegans feed healthful, meatless diets to their companion animals. Studies have shown that the ailments associated with meat consumption for humans such as allergies, cancer, and kidney, heart, and bone problems, also affect many nonhumans. Dogs' and cats' nutritional needs are easily met with a vegan diet and certain supplements. James Peden, author of *Vegetarian Cats and Dogs*, has developed Vegepet supplements to add to vegetarian and vegan recipes. They are nutritionally balanced and also come in special formulas for kittens, puppies, and lactating cats and dogs.

Some people wonder if it's cruel to omit meat from a dog or cat's diet. Vegetarian or vegan dogs and cats enjoy their food and good health, and a vegetarian diet for your companion animal is ethically consistent with animal rights philosophy. Animals in the wild commonly eat quite a lot of vegetable matter. Besides, to feed them the meat they would naturally eat, you would have to serve them whole mice or allow them to hunt for themselves, an option that is unfair to native species of birds and other small animals, since companion cats and dogs have been removed from the food chain and have advantages that free-roaming animals lack.

Important Supplements

Making vegetarian food for dogs is easy because dogs are omnivorous and usually hearty eaters. Recipes for vegetarian and vegan dogs are available along with the Vegedog supplement from James Peden's company, Harbinger's of a New Age (see contact information below). It is important to follow directions carefully. If you make any changes in ingredients, make sure that you do not change the nutritional balance of the recipe. If



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a dog receives too little protein, calcium, or vitamin D, his or her health could be jeopardized.

Additionally, some dogs need two amino acids called L-carnitine and taurine, which are not generally added to commercial dog foods and can be insufficient in homemade dog food as well. A deficiency of these nutrients can cause dilated cardiomyopathy, a serious illness in which the heart becomes large and flabby and can no longer function. This illness generally strikes middle-aged dogs who are deficient in L-carnitine or taurine because of breed, size, individual genetic makeup, or diet. Supplementary L-carnitine and taurine can be bought at your local health food store. (And Vegedog supplement now contains taurine.)

Cats are often more finicky than dogs, and their nutritional requirements are more complicated. Cats need a considerable amount of vitamin A, which is important in the production of carotene. Insufficient amounts may cause loss of hearing, as well as problems with skin, bones, and intestinal and reproductive systems. Cats also need taurine. A feline lacking taurine can lose eyesight and could develop cardiomyopathy. Commercial pet food companies often add taurine obtained from molluscs. James Peden found vegetable sources of both taurine and vitamin A, plus arachidonic acid, another essential feline nutrient. He then developed veterinarian-approved supplements Vegecat and Vegekit to add to his recipes. These recipes are probably the healthiest way to feed cats a vegan diet at this time.

Dogs and cats who are eating only cooked or processed food also benefit from the addition of digestive enzymes to their food. These are obtainable through animal supply catalogs and health food stores. Any raw vegetables in a dog's diet must be grated or put through a food processor to enhance digestibility.

Making the Adjustment

To help with the adjustment to a vegetarian or vegan diet, start by mixing the vegetarian food in with what you usually serve. Gradually change the proportion until there is no meat left. If your efforts are met with resistance, tempt your animal friends by adding soy milk, nutritional yeast, spirulina, oil (temporarily), tomato sauce, avocado, catnip (for cats), garlic powder, or other seasonings, and by serving it warm. Most dogs love spaghetti. Many cats like melon pieces and nutritional yeast, and most love mashed chickpeas (garbanzo beans). If your companion animals are addicted to supermarket pet food, it may take a while for them to adapt. Don't be alarmed if they skip a meal at first; in the wild, animals often go on fasts.

After switching dogs or cats to a vegetarian diet, monitor them closely to make sure their new diet agrees with them, especially if they are still puppies or kittens. Watch for chronic gastrointestinal problems, and note any new health problems. Most dogs' and cats' health improves on a vegetarian diet, but occasionally an animal may not thrive, so use common sense if this occurs.

Vegan Dog Biscuit Recipe

- 9 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 cup nutritional yeast
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. garlic powder

Mix dry ingredients. Add approximately 3 cups water. Knead into a pliable dough. Roll out to 1/8" thickness. Cut into desired shapes. Bake for 10-15 minutes at 350°F. (Important: After turning off oven, leave biscuits in the oven overnight or for an 8-hour period so they become hard and crunchy.)

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