

FEEDING YOUR BULLDOG

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How much should he weigh?

My bulldogs weighs xx pounds, is he too fat? Too thin? A 6'5" person weighing 150 lbs. is probably quite thin; a 5' person at the same weight is pushing portly. Weight is only a number. Proper weight is the right amount of weight for the frame of the dog. Personally, I like to see the last rib. It should be apparent that the dog has ribs but you shouldn't be able to count them.

To keep your dog in good condition you need to monitor the amount of food he is eating. Free feeding makes it difficult for you to know if the dog is off his feed and not eating the usual amount. This can be the first indication of an illness. If he is too heavy you can only reduce his food by measuring the portions. Free feeding several dogs together can result in the dogs lower in the pecking order not getting enough to eat. It is not unusual for a pack leader to prevent the other members from eating as much as they would like. I separate all of my dogs according to fast, medium and slow eaters so everyone gets to eat their meal undisturbed and the faster eaters do not get an unneeded portion.

Many times people tell me they feel guilty if they don't feed their dog all he wants. Remember dogs are prey animals and will eat voraciously at a kill because they don't know when the next meal is coming and dogs in the wild don't eat all that regularly. Our dogs are not in danger of starvation! As their caretakers we should never feel guilty for doing all in our power to keep them healthy and in peak condition.

What should he eat?

Generally you get what you pay for in dog food. The cheaper foods offered in the grocery are usually not the same quality as the brands carried by the pet stores. When you feed better quality food it does cost more but most dogs do not require as much of it and your clean up is significantly reduced.

I am not a nutritionist and if you have allergy or health problems, definitely consult with your vet about your dog's diet. The following is just what has worked for me over the years and might be a place for you to start if your dog's weight is not optimum.

Adding small amounts of meat to the kibble makes it more palatable and dogs will usually eat more of it. My dogs tend to be pretty lean when fed only kibble. The majority of my dogs eat 2-2 ½ cups of Nutra Nugget Lamb and Rice (available at Costco) mixed with a heaping tablespoon of Pedigree canned meat. On alternate days I feed canned mackerel in place of the Pedigree, splitting one can between six dogs. The canned fish is high in vitamin A and the omega fats. I also feed a hard-boiled egg, pureed shell and all in the blender with water, three times a week. I add a Pet Tab vitamin tablet once a day. The kibble and the meat are split into two meals a day. My Siberian Husky mixed breed has a very definite weight problem so she is fed ¾ cup of kibble twice a day with very small amounts of meat, etc. I also add 1/3 can of green beans or some other canned vegetable. This helps fill her up and makes her think she is getting a significant meal.

How much should I feed?

You should feed your dog the amount needed to keep him in correct weight. Just like people, dogs have different metabolisms. Prize weighs 47 lbs. Spy 62 lbs. On the same amount of food (2 cups of kibble/day) Prize is slightly lean and Spy is plush, meaning he doesn't need any more weight! Our two very thin rescue dogs are eating 4 plus cups of kibble a day plus ¼ can meat and they are offered more if they want.

Many dogs need to eat less in the summer and more in the winter. Treats are also a part of a diet. I seldom feed people food and limit the dog treats to very small portions. Break a dog biscuit in several pieces and your dog thinks he is getting more. Dogs count the number of pieces, not the size. It is very easy to add another ¼ to ½ cup of food using treats and over time this will really add weight.

Look at your dog and use common sense in evaluating his weight. Many of our rescue dogs are almost emaciated and many of our club members' dogs are past pleasingly plump (no names mentioned ☺). Help your dog get to his correct weight for his health and welfare and you will have him with you longer.