

## HOME-MADE DIETS FOR DOGS:

Home-made diets have proven to be quite successful in many cases, too. But it takes a **very** dedicated pet owner, since it is imperative to prepare the same home-cooked diet for a minimum of 8 weeks. Read that again: A minimum of 8 weeks ! The best choice is a combination of a carbohydrate such as sweet potatoes, peas or pinto beans (and DO NOT add butter, milk, bread !) with a novel protein such as rabbit, venison, kangaroo (these can often be ordered online). As mentioned earlier, **salmon** and **white fish (such as tuna)** can only be considered **if your pet has not eaten them before**.

If you don't have access to one of the novel proteins, then a diet consisting exclusively of potatoes, peas or pinto beans is satisfactory. While this diet doesn't seem very appealing or nourishing, remember that the whole purpose of the diet is to try to identify if the pet has a food allergy over a mere 2 to 3 months.

## HOME-MADE DIETS FOR CATS:

Since cats can be fussy about what they eat, cooking up a home-made diet for a kitty can be a big challenge, but there are several choices of proteins. Lamb, ostrich, rabbit, venison or duck have all been used with good success. They can be fed alone, or they can be blended with potato or rice. In general, we recommend a commercial food allergy diet for cats since they can be so finicky.

### The Biggest Challenge to a Food Allergy Trial: HOW COMMITTED ARE YOU ?

Once we begin a food allergy trial, these pets can eat absolutely NOTHING ELSE FOR 8 to 12 WEEKS except for the special diet ! This means that no other foods, treats, flavored chew toys, or flavored heartworm preventives should be given to your pet during the trial.

**Please understand: If a pet owner should decide to cheat / stray at all from the recommended diet, it will defeat the whole purpose of the food trial ! So either you're committed ... or you're not. There's no in-between. And only you can decide.**

### Very important features for you to follow for DOGS on a Food Allergy trial:

- 1) Look back on the first page again. I list the Top 95% sources of food allergies in dogs. If we suspect a dog has food allergies, doesn't it make sense to avoid these ingredients ??? Of course it does. You must become an avid reader of dog food labels.
- 2) NO !!! Cheese (no dairy !) – Bread – Peanut butter – Rawhide bones – Milk bone type treats – Greenies – Poultry or beef favored toothpaste – Flavored chewable Heartworm tablets
- 3) During a trial, we strongly advise switching your dog to a Topical Heartworm product (we have Revolution and Advantage Multi) in order to avoid animal protein and soy in the chewable tablets.
- 4) If in doubt, leave it out !
- 5) Confine your dog to leash walks to prevent them from wandering on their own and finding other food sources.
- 6) If you're giving medication to your dog, you can use VEGAN marshmallows (available online or at Whole Foods Market) to hide the pills.
- 7) If you brush your pet's teeth, use a "vanilla mint" flavored pet toothpaste. Do Not use poultry flavored.
- 8) Keep your dog out of the kitty litter !
- 9) Prevent your dog from licking the food dish of another dog or cat.
- 10) Re-read #1 through #9 ... then read it again :-D

### For CATS on a Food Allergy trial:

- 1) Do not let your cats go outdoors since they can often find other food sources.
- 2) Prevent your cat from licking the food dish of another cat or dog.

Skin infections caused by bacteria and/or yeast can cause considerable itching, so it's important to watch for red or irritated areas of skin. We need to treat these skin infections to help accurately gauge the success of a food allergy trial.

We typically can determine within 8 to 12 weeks if your pet has a food allergy, but **remember that 10-15% of pets that have a food allergy may not respond to a dietary trial**. That's one of several things that make coping with food allergies so frustrating.

If we get a noticeable improvement, we can then try to find the cause of the allergy by introducing individual proteins or sources of meat every 2 weeks to try to identify what triggered the allergic reaction. We'll start by introducing beef, chicken, grain or dairy products, then (if necessary) other possible ingredients to find what actually caused the problem. If we can identify the food that's causing the problem, then you'll know what to avoid feeding your pet. Of course, many clients are happy to keep their pet on the new diet, and may decide that it's not worth it to find out what their pet is allergic to.

Food allergies can be a challenge to diagnose, but a **committed, disciplined and dedicated pet owner** will certainly find a way to stick with the diet plan. The reward of your pet's comfort can be well worth the effort.



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