

Food Therapy for Pets

“You are what you eat” / “You become what you eat”

WHAT IS TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE (TCM) FOOD THERAPY?

- According to TCM foods are just like herbs and can be selected appropriately to tonify, cleanse and regulate the body, to restore and maintain balance of Yin and Yang
- TCM classifies food according to energetic effects (for example, foods that are warming and nourishing, and foods that cool and eliminate/drain)
- Western nutrition focuses primarily on calories, carbohydrate, fat, protein and vitamin content of food

TCM PRINCIPLES

- Everything in the world can be described, explained, and further divided into Yin and Yang
- Yin = cool, dark, still, inward, downward, feminine, hypo function
- Yang = hot, bright, active, outward, upward, masculine, hyper function
- Yin & Yang: "You become what you eat"
- Balance of Yin & Yang = health
 - Five Tastes & Five Element Theory: Sweet (Earth), Spicy/Pungent (Metal), Salty (Water), Sour (Wood), Bitter (Fire)
 - Thermal properties of food: Neutral (Yin & Yang balanced), Cool/Cold (Yin), Warm/Hot (Yang)

- Fast-growing foods, foods with high water content, raw foods tend to be cooler (lettuce, water melon, raw meat)
- Slow-growing foods tend to be warmer (root vegetables)
- Highly processed foods (kibble, canned food) tend to be hot

COMMERCIAL FOOD VS. "NATURAL" FOOD

Natural diet (in the wild)

- Food that is "in season" in a particular geographic area/climate
- Cats: high-protein, high-moisture, meat-based diet with moderate amount of fat, and approximately 3-5% of calories from carbohydrates
- Cats have no dietary need for carbohydrates and have a decreased capability of processing and digesting carbohydrates
- Dogs ate prior to domestication: meat, fish, insects, grasses, roots, bark, eggs, moss, mushrooms, flowers, soil, feces from other animals; after domestication their diet expanded to include cooked foods and grains (depending on geographic area and culture)

Commercial foods = "food for the masses", do not take into account individual needs, origin of ingredients unknown to consumer, highly processed, high in carbohydrates (especially dry foods), contain additives and large amount of non-animal proteins (cheaper), ingredients lack variety, diversity, quality, and freshness

Home-made food = closest to "natural", origin of ingredients are known, diet can be individualized, local ingredients, minimally processed, fresh & wholesome, prepared with love

BASIC RULES FOR HOME-MADE PET DIETS

Adult healthy dogs: 1 part protein, 1 part fat, 1 part carbohydrate

Adult healthy cats: 5 parts protein, 4 parts fat, 1 part carbohydrates/fiber

Young, growing pets: higher meat & fat contents, raw foods

Older pets: higher carb/fiber content, cooked food

Arctic dog breeds (Siberian Husky): diet higher in protein, fat, raw bones

Toy breeds (Shih Tzu): cooked foods, no raw bones, higher carbohydrate content

Protein sources

- Neutral: beef, pork, duck, dairy products, lentils
- Warm: lamb, chicken, turkey
- Cool: chicken eggs, sardines, tuna, rabbit, tofu

Fat sources: Avocado, egg, meat fat, fish/chicken skins, shrimp, coconut oil, butter, vegetable oil (dogs only)

Carbohydrate sources (mainly for dogs)

- Neutral: white rice, brown rice, quinoa, sweet potato, yam, white potato
- Warm: sweet rice (mochi), oats
- Cool: pearl barley, buckwheat, corn, millet

Vegetables & Fruits

- Neutral: beet root, beet greens, cabbage, mushrooms, figs
- Warm: asparagus, green beans, kale, cherries, raspberry, strawberry
- Cool: alfalfa sprouts, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cucumber, apples
- Spices: garlic (not cats!), basil, fennel seed, dill, ginger (all warming)

Bones:

Never feed baked, broiled or barbecued bones, feed bones after a meal, feed raw or after cooking for a long time (> 1 hour), use bonemeal instead for brachiocephalic dogs

Supplements:

Calcium: Unless feeding bones, add calcium to food: 30 mg calcium per lb of body weight per day for adult dogs and 20 mg per lb per day for adult cats

- For example, 1 tsp egg shell powder contains about 2000 mg calcium

Multivitamins: Follow directions on label

Taurine (cats): 250 - 1000 mg per day (safe and inexpensive)

Essential Fatty Acids and Vitamin D: 300 mg EPA and DHA and 225 - 300 IU Vitamin D3 per 10 lbs. of body weight per day

- For example, 1 tsp of Wild Alaskan Salmon Oil contains approx. 450 IU Vitamin D, 455 mg DHA and 409 mg EPA

To make food more Yang: Grill, bake, pressure cook, salt, dehydrate food

To make food more Yin: Boil, ferment, refrigerate, add water and sweeten food

USING FOOD AS MEDICINE

- Disease prevention & Restoration of balance
- Feed local and feed with the seasons
- Pacific Northwest
 - Summer (hot and dry): feed neutral, cool and moisturizing foods, cook food briefly or feed raw;
 - Winter (cold and damp): feed warming foods, cook foods at higher temperatures (frying, roasting)
- Avoid extremes
- Consider general temperature preference of pet (is pet seeking warmth or cold areas in the home?)
- Consider the TCM properties of certain diseases:
 - *Yang conditions:* acute fever & infection, abscesses, acute hepatitis, injuries, arthritis with inflamed and swollen joints, hot spots, moist skin infections, hyperactivity, aggression, agitation
 - *Yin conditions:* chronic fever, anemia, diabetes, kidney disease, dry skin, generalized weakness, chronic digestive problems, hypothyroidism

Cornelia Wagner, Dr. med. vet., CVA
Hawthorne Veterinary Clinic
1431 SE 23rd Ave | Portland, OR 97214
503.233.2332 | <http://hawthornevet.com>

- *Skin disease/ear infections* often characterized by Heat and Damp (discharges, redness, inflammation): feed cooling foods (esp. in summer), avoid hot foods (kibble, lamb, spices)
- *Chronic Kidney Failure & Arthritis* often characterized by Cold (pet is seeking warmth): feed warming foods, add warming spices (lamb, cinnamon, ginger)
- *Inflammatory Bowel Disease* (common in older cats): feed warming and easy to digest, cooked foods (bone broth), add fiber to increase moisture content of feces (flax seeds, pumpkin)
- *Hyperthyroidism* (cats): feed cooling foods
- *Hypothyroidism* (dogs): feed warming foods
- *Diabetes*: cats – diet with high protein & fat content (no kibble); dogs - keep diet consistent, include barley (high in fiber and low glycemic index)

RESOURCES:

Literature:

Food Energetics Chart: <http://www.herbsmithinc.com/Home/Education/FoodCharts/default.asp>

How to make cat food; lists of protein, carb and fat contents of commercial foods: <http://www.catinfo.org>

Fresh Food & Ancient Wisdom by Dr. Ihor Basko: <http://www.drasko.com/site/freshfoodbook>

Dr. Becker's Real Food for Healthy Dogs and Cats: <http://www.dogwise.com/ItemDetails.cfm?ID=DN303>

Feed You Best Friend Better by Rick Woodford: <http://www.indiebound.org/book/9781449409937>

Pet Food Companies:

PetTao - Commercial Pet Food based on TCM principles: <http://pettao.com>

Just Food For Dogs: <http://justfoodfordogs.com>

Rad Cat: <http://www.radfood.com>