



HOW TO FEED YOUR DOG FREEZE-DRIED, AIR-DRIED & DEHYDRATED FOODS

Katy Patterson-Miller, DVM, Director of Dog & Cat Health & Nutrition

WHY FEED A FREEZE-DRIED OR DEHYDRATED DOG FOOD?

Here are the four most compelling reasons to feed your dog a freeze-dried or dehydrated diet:

- 1 Close to nature.** After fresh or frozen diets, freeze-dried and dehydrated dog foods are the closest to the diet of a dog's wild ancestors. The lower levels of heat used in making these foods keep their nutrients closer to their original state than the nutrients in kibble and wet foods.
- 2 Health benefits.** Evidence that freeze-dried and dehydrated diets contribute to canine health is still mostly anecdotal, but the anecdotal evidence is compelling. Most dog owners see healthier, shinier coats; smaller, less smelly stools; greater energy; better appetites and a more engaging personality after their dog starts eating raw. Owners have also reported positive changes in dogs suffering from obesity, dental health issues, urinary tract infections, vomiting, diarrhea, diabetes, allergies and food intolerances.
- 3 Safe.** Freeze-dried and dehydrated diets for dogs are extremely unlikely to contain harmful pathogens.
- 4 As easy to feed as kibble.** Feeding freeze-dried and dehydrated diets is simple.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN

In recent years, many veterinarians, including Mud Bay's staff veterinarian, have embraced unprocessed and minimally processed foods as an essential part of a holistic approach to long-term canine health. While other veterinarians oppose feeding unprocessed and minimally processed diets to dogs, the risks to dogs associated with raw meat and chewing bones that seem to concern these vets are almost nonexistent for freeze-dried and dehydrated diets. Nevertheless, every diet—raw, kibble, wet or home-made—carries with it potential advantages and disadvantages.

Before putting your dog on any diet—freeze-dried, dehydrated or kibble—we suggest discussing the diet with your veterinarian. This is particularly important if your dog currently has any veterinary conditions. If at any time your dog refuses to eat for more than 48 hours, develops symptoms or otherwise seems unwell, contact your veterinarian. If a dietary transition leads to vomiting that continues for 24 hours after you stop feeding or begins again after you reintroduce food, contact your veterinarian.

HOW TO CHOOSE AMONG FREEZE-DRIED AND DEHYDRATED DIETS

There are two steps in choosing a freeze-dried or dehydrated diet for your dog.

1 Choose between carbohydrate or carbohydrate free

Carbohydrate-free. Most freeze-dried and dehydrated diets for dogs are made primarily of meat with small amounts of vegetables and fruits added to supply specific nutrients but few or no calories coming from carbohydrates. These diets approximate the diet of dogs' wild ancestors—wolves and other canines whose diets was primarily prey animals. Many canine nutritionists believe that the digestive systems of most dogs are best adapted to these kinds of diets.

With carbs. Some freeze-dried and dehydrated diets are designed to imitate the omnivorous human diet that people have been sharing with their dogs during most of the 15,000 years since dogs began to be domesticated. This diet replaces some of the meat in the ancestral diet with grains and other carbohydrates and can be thought of as a freeze-dried version of a home-cooked meal.

2 Choose between Freeze-dried, Dehydrated and Air-dried

Freeze-dried. Food is freeze-dried by first freezing raw ingredients and then using negative air pressure to cause the frozen water to sublime (go directly from solid ice to gas without a liquid phase). Vitamins,

minerals, enzymes and other nutrients undergo less change during freeze-drying than during conventional cooking. Freeze-dried foods are nutritionally closer to fresh foods than anything but frozen.

Dehydrated. Food is dehydrated by using low heat to slowly cause the water in the ingredients to evaporate. Because dehydration uses low heat, the process results in more change to most nutrients than freeze-drying, but significantly less change than the cooking used to make wet food or kibbles.

Air-dried. Air-drying is dehydration without an artificial heat source. Air-dryers often use the sun and the wind to gradually evaporate the moisture out of food ingredients. Air-dried foods generally have the same characteristics as dehydrated foods.

3 Choose the meat protein that works best for your dog. Of the meats used in freeze-dried and dehydrated dog food, chicken has the most complete amino acid profile. If your dog has an allergy or intolerance to chicken or a history of doing better on a different meat, use what you know about your dog to guide your choice. Otherwise, we recommend starting with chicken.

SUBSTITUTE FREEZE-DRIED/DEHYDRATED FOR PART OF YOUR DOG'S KIBBLE OR TRANSITION TO 100%

Most raw foods experts believe the greatest benefits for most dogs come from a diet that's 100% unprocessed or minimally processed. If you want to transition your dog to a diet that's mostly or entirely unprocessed or minimally processed, see Mud Bay's *How to Transition Dogs to Raw Foods* for detailed guidance.

Most dog owners who feed freeze-dried or dehydrated—especially owners of medium and large dogs—combine 25% to 50% freeze-dried or dehydrated foods with a corresponding amount of kibble because this approach is less expensive and more flexible than feeding all freeze-dried or dehydrated. To transition your dog to this kind of diet, simply reduce the amount of kibble you feed your dog by 25% to 50% and simultaneously begin feeding him 25% to 50% of the amount of freeze-dried or dehydrated food that's recommended for a dog his size (apply the same percentage in both cases). Freeze-dried/dehydrated foods and kibble are digested at different pH levels, so feed them at different meals. Most dogs can adjust quickly to a small substitution of freeze-dried or dehydrated food for kibble, but owners transitioning their dogs to 40% to 50% kibble should start with a 25% substitution and then increase to a 40% to 50% substitution after a week.

You can increase your dog's chances of a seamless transition to raw by starting a prebiotic and digestive enzyme supplement a few days before transitioning to raw and continuing for a few months. After you've been feeding freeze-dried or dehydrated food for a few weeks, adjust the amount of kibble or freeze-dried /dehydrated food *slightly* up or down if you or your veterinarian believes your dog needs to gain or lose weight.

Substituting freeze-dried or dehydrated food for part of a dog's kibble is unlikely to lead to health concerns, but if your dog refuses to eat or develops vomiting, diarrhea, excess gas or constipation, you may be transitioning him too quickly. If this happens, stop the transition and withhold food for 24 hours. Then begin feeding frequent, small meals of his original diet. If all symptoms cease and he appears back to normal, re-start the transition a few days later, but with a more gradual approach—see Mud Bay's *How to Transition Dogs to Raw* for detailed guidance. If the transition leads to vomiting that continues for 24 hours, contact your veterinarian.

RESULTS

You should begin seeing improvements in your dog's skin, coat, energy level and stool within a few weeks. Greater benefits are likely to become apparent over the following two or three months.

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Mud Bay staffers are specifically trained to help owners transition their dogs to freeze-dried and dehydrated foods. Muddies can also help you find the products that match the recommendations on this sheet, so if you need more help or information, please let us know.