



HOW TO TRANSITION DOGS TO WET FOODS

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

THE ISSUE

High caliber, natural wet dog foods are higher in moisture, less processed, richer in high quality meat and closer to the natural diet of dogs than kibble foods. Owners who transition their dogs from kibble to wet diets generally observe less shedding and shinier, healthier coats within a few weeks of making the transition.

Domestic dogs usually eat a diet that's much less varied than the diets of their owners. The variety of most human diets often leads us to underestimate the impact of a diet change on dogs. Especially if your dog has been eating the same thing for a long time, its body is in balance with its current diet, and it will take time for him to achieve a new balance with a new diet. Transitioning him gradually reduces the disruption of the intestinal bacteria and the irritation of the digestive tissues that frequently result from rapid diet changes. These are guidelines to follow when transitioning your dog from kibbles to a wet diet, but similar approaches can be used in transitioning a dog from raw to wet food.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN

If your dog refuses to eat for more than 48 hours, contact your veterinarian. If the diet transition leads to vomiting that continues for 24 hours after you stop feeding or begins again after you reintroduce food, contact your veterinarian.

THE SOLUTION

Almost all dogs do well with gradual diet transitions, but if your dog refuses to eat or develops vomiting, diarrhea, excess gas or constipation, you may be trying to transition him too quickly. If this happens, stop the transition and withhold food for 24 hours. After 24 hours, begin feeding frequent, small meals of his original diet. If all symptoms cease and he appears to be back to normal, you can re-start the transition a few days later, but with a more gradual approach. If the transition leads to vomiting that continues for 24 hours, contact your veterinarian.

1 Gradually transition to wet food

- **The transition should take at least a week.** Transitioning from one diet to another should take at least 7 days—and it's fine to make the transition more gradual still.

Transition Schedule

	Days 1-2	Days 3-4	Days 5-6	Day 7
KIBBLE	75%	50%	25%	
WET FOOD	25%	50%	75%	100%

- **Transitioning to a diet that's higher in fat takes longer.** If the fat level of the new diet is more than three percentage points (based on dry matter) higher than the fat level of your dog's current diet, your dog's pancreas will need much longer to increase its production of enzymes and enable your dog to safely make the transition. Double (or triple) the length of each stage in the transition schedule above.
- **Start by putting kibble and wet food next to each other** in a bowl or on a plate. Use the proportions outlined above. If your dog doesn't eat the wet food, try stirring kibble and wet food together.

Mud Bay and its staff strive to help dog and cat owners improve the health of their animals and to increase the happiness owners experience in caring for their animals by providing natural foods, well-made supplies and useful information. Mud Bay and its staff do not diagnose or treat specific conditions, and the information provided by Mud Bay's staff, publications, website and other media are not substitutes for treatment by a veterinarian.

© Mud Bay, Inc 2018. All rights reserved.

2 Support your dog's digestive health through the transition

For many dogs, a gradual approach is sufficient to ensure a successful transition to a new food. But some dogs require—and almost every dog will benefit from—supplementation that strengthens digestive health during the transition.

- **Supplement with prebiotics (a few days before starting the transition, if possible).** Prebiotics feed the good bacteria already in your dog's digestive tract. Prebiotics include fructooligosaccharides (FOS), inulin, oligofructose, chicory root, dandelion, burdock, wild yam, jicama, agave, and garlic.
- **Supplement with digestive enzymes.** Digestive enzymes help dogs get as much nutrition as possible from whatever diet they're eating. Look for products with Protease, Amylase, Cellulase or Lipase.

3 What if your dog refuses to eat wet dog food?

Kibble dog foods can be very palatable because they're sprayed with palatability enhancers after extrusion. Without these palatability enhancers most dogs would not eat kibble, and dogs can develop strong preferences for the palatability enhancers of the kibbles they've eaten for a long time. Palatability enhancers make the transition from dry to wet food harder, but with patience and the right techniques, most owners can successfully transition their dogs from kibble to wet food. Here are techniques that have helped owners change the preference of a great many stubborn kibble enthusiasts. Try one then another until you find the one that works with your dog.

- **End free feeding.** If your dog is a free feeder, begin by establishing two or three meals per day. Meals should be at the same time every day, and you should provide a measured amount of food.
- **Limit his time with kibble.** Limit your dog's time with kibble to 20 minutes two or three times per day. Offer a small amount of wet food at the same time. After 20 minutes, take away the remaining kibble, but leave the wet food out. Gradually reduce the amount of dry being fed.
- **Add a healthy, tasty topper.** Find a topper that your dog is so crazy for that he'll eat the wet food along with the topper. Toppers to try: Dehydrated raw foods, toppers or mixers, freeze-dried treats, liver, lung, heart, meat-based baby foods. Sometimes you can crush his favorite dry diet and place it on top of the wet food. Once he's eating the wet diet along with the topper, very gradually reduce the amount of topper until he's eating nothing but wet food.
- **Switch to a low carb dry diet first.** If you have a very stubborn kibble eater, you might try transitioning first to a low-carbohydrate dry diet. After a month on the low carb kibble, re-start the transition to wet food.

RESULTS

Gradual transitions to wet dog food almost always lead to success. If you don't succeed the first time, stop, take a break, let your dog regain balance with her diet, support your dog's digestive system with supplements and then try again more gradually

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Mud Bay staffers are specifically trained to help owners transition their dogs to wet 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.