7 Reasons Treats are Better Than Table Scraps

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Most of us are guilty of sneaking a tasty table scrap to our pets during or after dinner. While there isn't anything inherently wrong with giving your pet an occasional morsel left on your plate, there are some very good reasons to limit your handouts to treats made for pets.

1. Once a moocher, always a moocher.

Once you reward begging behavior with something off your plate, you can expect to see the same hopeful eyes looking up at you every meal from that day forward. That's fine if you don't mind, but if you have a dog that whines, her behavior may disrupt your dinner. If you do mind your pet's presence, you'll have a hard time training her to stay out of the room now that she knows she just might get a handout. Also, some dinner guests don't appreciate a tongue-wagging dog at their elbow while they try to eat their meal.

2. Table scraps don't offer the nutrition pets need.

The more you fill her up with your food, the less likely she is to eat all of hers. Since our nutritional needs are not the same as our pets, she'll get less of the vitamins and minerals she needs and probably more of those she doesn't need. Most pet treats are developed with your pet's nutritional needs in mind.

3. Table scraps are the quickest route to weight problems.

Most scraps are nothing more than empty calories. Because you probably save that hunk of fat or sweet morsel you know she'll like, she gets all the wrong food for a trim waistline. Overweight pets, besides not looking their best, have a higher risk of many health problems.

4. Table scraps are a leading cause of digestive disorders.

The rich foods we eat can wreak havoc on your pet's digestive tract. A simple, consistent diet keeps their system functioning as it should. Throw in your very different foods and spices, and don't be surprised if your pet has bad gas, bad breath, loose stools, or other digestive dysfunction.

5. You could end up with a finicky eater.

If your pet develops a taste for your food, she may stop eating hers. After all, which would you prefer, dry dog food or juicy steak and hamburger every night?

6. You may create a thief.

Pets that are used to eating human food are more likely to devour the turkey leftovers that you left unattended on the kitchen table. Or, they might tip over the garbage can to get at that fish you "forgot" to give them. As you know, many bones, chocolate, and other food items can be dangerous to your pet.

7. Treats are a better choice.

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A dog treat gives you and your pet the same satisfaction as giving or receiving a table scrap. It promotes that special bond between you and your pet, it gives your pet a new, delicious taste to savor, and it makes both of you feel good.

Pet treats, however, are usually more nutritious and tend to have far fewer calories than most table scraps. There are other benefits too, depending on the type of treat you buy. Biscuit-type treats are good for your pet's teeth as they help scrape off plaque and tartar that can cause dental problems. Rawhide satisfies a dog's urge to chew, relieves boredom, and is also good for teeth.

Treats also don't encourage bad behavior. In fact, it's usually the opposite. Many people use treats in training to reward positive behavior.

As with anything in life, treats should be used in moderation. Too many treats can add weight and affect your dog's meals. As a rule, treats should never account for more than 10% of your pet's food intake.

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