

## Feeding Drs. Foster & Smith Foods for Special Conditions FAQs

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

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### **If my dog has a health problem what should I feed?**

If your dog has a medical condition that could be managed with diet, discuss the option of using one of the Drs. Foster & Smith formulas with your veterinarian. We will be happy to send you a complete analysis of any of the foods. If your dog has any health or medical problems, you should consult your veterinarian before changing your dog's diet. Various disease processes may require dietary changes to lessen the effects or progression of the disease. These are some general guidelines:

- Dogs with colitis, constipation, or anal gland disease may benefit from diets with increased dietary fiber.
- Dogs with inflammatory bowel disease and colitis can benefit from diets which have highly digestible sources of protein, fat, and carbohydrates.
- Dogs with heart disease may require a special diet with decreased amounts of sodium and increased amounts of the amino acid taurine.
- Dogs with chronic kidney failure should be on diets with highly digestible protein so there are fewer breakdown products, which the kidneys are responsible for eliminating in the urine.
- Dogs with dental and oral disease, who experience pain while eating hard food, may need to switch to canned food, until the oral problem can be treated.
- Dogs with cancer have special dietary needs; we recommend increasing Omega-3 fatty acids in the diet.

Your veterinarian can make the best recommendations for your dog's particular health problem.

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## **QA Do you offer a food for pets with certain diseases such as diabetes, pancreatitis, kidney disease, or liver disease?**

If your pet has a medical condition that could be managed with diet, discuss with your veterinarian the option of feeding one of the Drs. Foster & Smith formulas. We will be happy to send you a complete analysis of any of our foods. If your pet has any health or medical problems, be sure to consult your veterinarian before changing your pet's diet.

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## **QA Could my dog be allergic to her food?**

Food allergies account for about 10% of all the allergies seen in dogs. Dogs develop allergies to those foods that are most frequently fed. Keep in mind the fact that food allergies and food intolerances are not the same. Food allergies are true allergies and show the characteristic signs of itching and skin problems associated with allergies. Food intolerances usually result in diarrhea or vomiting and do not create a typical allergic response.

Several studies have shown that some very common pet food ingredients are more likely to cause food allergies than others. In order of the most common offenders in dogs are beef, dairy products, chicken, wheat, chicken eggs, corn, and soy.

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## **QA Are your foods appropriate for pets with allergies?**

Drs. Foster & Smith pet foods contain natural ingredients, natural preservatives, natural colors, and natural flavors which typically agree with pets' dietary and digestive needs. If your pet is highly sensitive to an ingredient, you should find a food that does not contain that ingredient. If your pet has allergies and you're not sure which food to feed, seek professional veterinary advice.

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## **QA How does a veterinarian test for food allergies?**

A veterinarian will test for food allergies by placing your dog in a food trial. A food trial consists of feeding an animal a novel food source of protein and carbohydrate for up to 12 weeks. A novel food source would be a protein and carbohydrate that the animal had never eaten before, such as rabbit and potato or venison and oats. These are available as commercial diets from your veterinarian. Special homemade trial diets can also be made under supervision from your veterinarian. For puppies or kittens undergoing a food trial, a balanced commercial diet is recommended.

Regardless of the diet used, it must be the only thing the animal eats for the length of the food trial. This means no rawhides or other treats (including flavored medications); absolutely nothing but the special food and water.

The food trial lasts until improvement is seen for at least 2 weeks, or for a total length of 12 weeks (unless he accidentally eats a food or treat he shouldn't - then it starts all over again.) Therefore, it is very important to keep the pet on the food trial diet, with no other foods or treats for the duration, or until your veterinarian and you agree that continued improvement has been shown. If the pet shows a marked reduction or elimination of the symptoms, then the animal is placed back on the original food. This is called "provocative testing" and is essential to confirm the diagnosis. If the symptoms return after going back on the original diet, the diagnosis of a food allergy

is confirmed. If there has been no change in symptoms, but a food allergy is still strongly suspected, then another food trial, using a different novel food source, could be tried. Lamb and rice diets are not considered novel food sources because so many animals have eaten foods that contain them. Most commercial lamb and rice diets also contain wheat, egg, corn, or other ingredients that can cause food allergies.

Once you determine a positive diagnosis of a food allergy, it is simple to eliminate that food from your pet's diet. You can choose from a special, commercially prepared diet or have a veterinary nutritionist create a homemade diet of your own. You will also need to monitor any treats that are given to your pet to ensure they do not contain the offensive ingredient

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### **Can Drs. Foster & Smith puppy food be used for pregnant or lactating (nursing) dogs? If so, how much should I feed?**

Yes, Drs. Foster & Smith puppy food is appropriate for pregnant or lactating dogs. **PREGANCY:** Your adult dog should eat a healthy adult pet food such as Drs. Foster & Smith Chicken & Brown Rice formula or Lamb & Brown Rice formula prior to breeding, to ensure optimal health before pregnancy. Continue feeding an adult dog food for the first few weeks of pregnancy. Starting the fourth week of pregnancy, begin adding a puppy food such as Drs. Foster & Smith Chicken & Brown Rice Formula puppy food to her diet. Each week increase the amount of the puppy food and decrease the amount of adult food, so when she is in her final week of pregnancy, she is eating all puppy food. Increase the frequency of the daily meals to three by mid pregnancy. She may need to eat small meals every 3-4 hours during the last week of the pregnancy as the puppies continue to take up more room.

**LACTATION:** Within 2-3 days of giving birth, your dog's appetite will dramatically increase to 2-4 times her pre-pregnancy intake. She will need a near-constant supply of Drs. Foster & Smith Puppy Formula Food and water to maintain her weight and health while feeding the puppies. You can add cottage cheese, or cooked egg depending upon your veterinarian's recommendations. If her weight is properly maintained, she should not look gaunt or thin. Ideally, she should weigh the same at the time of weaning as she did when she was bred.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** If a high-quality food is being fed, a pregnant dog does not usually need any additional supplements. Poor diet or incorrect supplementation can cause problems for the developing fetuses or the mother. Over-supplementing with calcium during pregnancy, for example, predisposes the mother to a disease called eclampsia. If you have questions about diet or supplements, talk with your veterinarian.

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### **My pet has done well on the food I currently feed; should I try your food to see if my pet fares better?**

If your pet seems to be in overall good health with a healthy energy level, bright eyes, shiny coat, and soft skin, the food you're feeding may be adequate to maintain good health. However, your pet may be missing some nutritional elements available in our foods - even though you may not be able to see the effects of what may be lacking in your pet's diet. You may want to try a small bag of one of our foods to see if your pet appears to benefit from our healthy ingredients. Be sure to [switch your pet's food gradually](#) to avoid stomach upset.

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### Could Drs. Foster and Smith food be causing my pet's excess gas?

Your pet's excess gas could be due to diet-related factors such as eating too quickly, eating too much, switching to a new diet too quickly, or changing the diet frequently. Minor amounts of gas are a normal part of your pet's digestive processes, and are to be expected. Major amounts of gas, however, are not typical, are unpleasant for you and your pet, and can often be remedied.

Be sure that your pet doesn't eat too quickly, that he doesn't eat more food than he needs, and that you're not changing his food frequently without allowing enough time to gradually change from the old food to the new. If adapting your pet's diet doesn't seem to help your pet's flatulence, consult your veterinarian

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### Could Drs. Foster and Smith food be causing my pet's loose stools?

Loose stools (diarrhea) can be caused by a pet's diet. However, diet is not the only cause. Be sure to consult your veterinarian if your pet is experiencing loose stools, as they could be an indication of illness.

If your pet has consistently loose stools that are not related to a physical illness, first check your pet's food to be sure it is not expired or spoiled. If the food is indeed spoiled or past its expiration date, replace it immediately. If this does not alleviate the problem try feeding less of the food; sometimes inadvertent overfeeding can cause loose stools because pet foods are typically very nutrient-rich and easy to digest. You may also choose to try feeding several small meals throughout the day, rather than 1 or 2 large ones.

If feeding less food or feeding several smaller meals does not eliminate the problem of loose stools, your dog may have an intolerance to one or more ingredients in the food. You may wish to try a different food.

Remember, periods of loose stools can quickly cause dehydration and deprive your dog's body of necessary nutrients, so be sure to contact your veterinarian as soon as possible.

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