



## Pet Care & Nutrition

### Feeding Management

Adult cats and dogs require sufficient nutrients to meet energy needs and to maintain and repair body tissues. Feeding amounts for maintenance of adult cats and dogs should be based on the animal's size and energy output. Activity levels vary dramatically between pets and will play an important role in determining calorie intake. Demands for energy can vary as follows:

- House pets can have a wide variety of activity levels. A pampered lap dog will require less calories than an active pet that regularly exercises outdoors.
- The dietary needs of a working dog (sheep/cattle dogs, police dogs, guide dogs, etc.) will depend on its occupation since the energy needs will increase with the work level and/or stress.
- Extreme hot or cold weather can increase the pet's energy needs in order for them to maintain body temperatures. Both keeping warm and keeping cool require extra energy expenditure.
- An animal recovering from surgery or suffering from a disease may have an increased nutritional requirement for repair and healing and to fight infection.

### Methods of Feeding

Cats and dogs may be fed successfully in a number of ways to meet both the owner's and the animal's needs and circumstances.

1. **Portion Control Feeding:** The food for a meal is measured and offered as a meal thereby controlling the amount of food that can be consumed. This method is used for weight control programs and for animals that might overeat if fed free choice. Food can be provided in one or more meals daily. We generally recommend that all dogs be fed twice daily. This means that the package feeding guidelines are divided into two meals spaced eight to twelve hours apart. Puppies/kittens, lactating animals, and animals recovering from certain medical conditions often require more than two meals per day.
2. **Free Choice Feeding:** This is also known as "ad lib" feeding or "free feeding." Food is available at all times, as much as the pet wants, whenever the pet wants. Most lactating pets are fed by the free choice method, and it is generally the method of choice for feeding most cats. This method is most appropriate when feeding dry food which will not spoil if left out. Some dogs and cats, however, will overeat with this method, so two associated diseases must be considered.
  - a) **Obesity:** If the pet begins to put on too much weight, the owner will need to switch to portion control feeding.
  - b) **Developmental Bone Diseases:** If the puppy to be fed is a large or giant breed or if the breed is susceptible to OCD, hypertrophic osteodystrophy, or hip dysplasia, do not free feed the puppies. They may overeat and this can lead to rapid growth and a greater incidence of bone diseases. Large or giant breed pups should be fed with a portion controlled or timed feeding method.
3. **Timed feeding method:** This method involves making a portion of food available for the pet to eat for a specified period of time. For example, the food can be placed in the dog's bowl for 30 minutes. After that time, if the pet has not consumed the food, it is removed. This can be a good feeding method for puppies, particularly just after weaning. The food can be offered to the puppies for 30 minutes, two or three times per day.