

# ASK OUR VETERINARIANS

**Dear Dr. Schmidt, I'm seriously looking into rescuing a dog from the Shelter. What are some guidelines I can use when I go buy him his first bag of dog food? Thank you. Tiffany**

Dear Tiffany,

This question can open up a big can of worms, but here it goes. This is the "Dr. Schmidt version" of what dog food to buy. First of all, keep it simple. If you stick with a name brand dog food, you will most likely be just fine. Different pet shops carry many different lines of higher quality foods than the grocery stores, and this can make it even more difficult to choose one. Dogs need a good quality, bio-available source of protein, and the NRC requirement is at least 22% protein. Good quality meat sources are better ingredients to achieve these numbers versus plant sources. You can feed a lot higher protein diet than this and not cause harm, but if your new dog does not need it, he/she will simply void it from his or her body or, worse yet, convert it to fat.

However, age, breed, activity, life stage, temperament, and environment are just a few variables that need to be considered.

Once you choose a good quality diet, let the dog talk to you on how well it is working for him. For example: How does his hair coat look...shiny and bright, or dull and dry? Is the skin nice and pink and healthy, or is it dry and flaky? Does he have normal, firm formed bowel movements, or does he have loose or unformed stools? And last but not least, one I hear in the exam room a lot: Does he pass an excessive amount of gas?

If things don't seem quite right, they probably aren't. That's when it's time to slowly switch him to a different diet. A consult with your veterinarian can help you decide which diet will be best for him or her. Hope this helps you get started. Good luck and thanks for giving an orphan a new loving home.

**Submitted by: Dr. Doug**



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