

## PROPER NUTRITION

Providing proper nutrition is always a concern among pet owners. I am frequently asked by clients about home-cooked diets. Commercial diets are popular because of their convenience, research-based standards for content and quality, and affordability. Within the past thirty years, many new companies have emerged and filled the shelves of pet stores with diets that differ greatly from the early ones developed by a pharmacist named Hill (Science Diet) and a ferret farm owner, who is the father of Iams diet.

There are many arguments for and against commercial diets. Recent advancement in nutrition and the discovery of nutraceuticals make commercial diets a new tool in promoting healthy and lengthy lives for our pets. The sophistication and price reflect the quality of the diet, and specialized diets are now comparable to power bars in human nutrition. Many clients blame these diets for causing their pets to be overweight. If humans do not practice healthy life styles with plenty of exercise, power bars will pack on the pounds. The same is true for pets.

There are specific nutrients that need to be met in diets of dogs vs. cats. Even the most renowned authorities in pet nutrition years ago had to learn the hard way that cats need special amino acids in their diets, otherwise they developed a fatal heart condition. Trying to prepare a high quality home-cooked diet that provides all the essential nutrients at consistent levels may be very hard for most of us. There is also the danger that an unbalanced homemade diet may upset the pet's digestive tract.

I am not trying to glorify commercial diets or say that homemade diets are better. The nutritional needs and requirements for animals vary greatly from ours, and choosing the proper diet for your pet is key to a long and healthy life. In my opinion, what happened to the pet food industry (recalls of tainted food) was a wake-up call. It made the companies alert to the need for refining the quality of their product. That translates to safer and better diets that I feel comfortable recommending instead of trying to prepare two dinners, one for our family and a second meal for our four-legged companions.