

The most common complaint I hear - - "I can't get my puppy to eat! He's such a picky eater!" Here's my personal encyclopedia on feeding your dog!

I've had dozens of puppies over my breeding years, and I've had 12 standard poodles of my own, plus shih tzus (for 40 yrs+), and even a toy poodle. NONE of them have been picky eaters! And dozens of your standard puppies, if you're on my news list, are likely descendants of my dogs. So why do you think your dog is a picky eater? I will almost guarantee it's YOUR fault! Ha!

Could be several things -

1) If you are following the feeding amounts recommended on the package of the kibble you feed, you are likely overfeeding. Remember, it's in their best interest to sell you more kibble! And if you are overfeeding, your dog may simply be full, not hungry, and you're interpreting it to be that he's picky!!

I feed my adult girls a generous 2 cups of kibble per day, split into two meals. I feed my adult boys a generous 3 cups per day, split into two meals. If you are feeding more than that or more than 2 meals per day, you're overfeeding, unless you have the exception to the rule – an extraordinarily BIG standard. Average weight for a bitch in good health, and average size, is 40-45 lbs. Average weight for a dog in good health, and average size is 55-60 lbs. And a healthy dog is LEAN! You shouldn't be able to see ribs, but you should be able to feel them easily, covered by a light layer of tissue and fat. Two smaller meals daily as opposed to 1 large meal is highly recommended as one way you can help reduce your dog's risk for bloat.

2) If your standard is turning up his nose at eating a single bite of his kibble, remember he's a poodle. Translated, that means he's SMART! If there's a kibble or food that he especially likes, he could very easily be holding out hoping you'll give in and give him that! Don't. I do not tolerate a picky eater; if they don't eat after 10 minutes, I pick it up, cover it, refrigerate it (if there's something in it besides kibble like canned food, hamburger, chicken, or fresh pet, etc.), and they get it again for the next meal. I let them go hungry!!! It won't happen too many times, and they get the message. Most dogs will eat what's put in front of them if they are hungry! I feed my dogs twice a day, and never at the same time - I want them on a feeding schedule that accommodates my activities, not locked into a specific time waiting to be fed. My "rule of thumb" is to spread their two meals apart by 12 hours. If I fed them in the morning at 7AM, then I'll feed them at night at 7PM; if I have dinner plans and won't be there at 7PM, then I feed them later in the morning, and then again when I get home. My schedule, not theirs!

3) If you've had children, how many times did you give your kids cookies, ice cream, chips, cheetos during the day, and then found them pushing their dinner around the plate, but not really chowing down? My dogs get one treat every day unless we are doing something special - and that's at bedtime. Puppies get VERY small treats for training rewards, might just be a single piece of their kibble if they are food motivated. No dog is going to eat their regular meal well if they have filled up on "junk food" during the day. Remember, the only acceptable reason for a dog to not eat is if he's sick - upset stomach or the like. If he goes more than 24 hours without eating, consider taking him to the vet. Always have water available even if sick. If a dog isn't drinking, that's serious, and you NEED to take him to the vet.

Randomly, a dog may have a sensitivity to something in their food. If you switch foods and he goes off his routine for eating, that may be the case - constantly licking his feet, sneezing, both good signs of a food allergy. FYI, the most common food allergy in dogs is chicken!!! The best foods you can feed them in order are: fish based, turkey based, chicken based, and red meat based. Surprised? Red meat is the hardest protein for them to digest, and makes the liver work the hardest to process it. I learned that the hard way when one of my dogs almost died due to liver failure - his liver was smaller than normal (congenital), and just plain worn out. Saved him, but he was a miracle. I feed a salmon & sweet potato formula kibble, with no corn, wheat or soy. My dogs love it! If you want to add some chicken to it now and then, cook it and cut it up and add it to their kibble so you will KNOW what's in it.

Don't feed from the table or from your plate! You are training a beggar! If you want to give your dog a few scraps, put it in his bowl. Read the list on my website about foods that are really bad for your pets, even dangerous, and don't give them those. I used to use peanut butter as an enticement for training - gotta read labels now, as many brands have xylitol, which is poison to dogs! Be aware, be informed - no grapes, no raisins, no onions, no avocados. There's more, so read up! If you don't know what's in it, don't put it in your dog. One good rule to follow - if it's made in or packaged in or manufactured in China, don't buy it!!! No quality control on pet foods from there. Another good rule - the majority of the dog foods you can buy at a grocery store are not worth the bag they are packaged in. Buy a good middle of the road dog food - Chewy's, PetSmart, Petco. I'm not a fan of all those expensive "designer" diets. I feed my own dogs (have for about 8 yrs now) Costco's signature label Nature's Domain, salmon and sweet potato formula. It's a 35# bag for \$34! Beat that! And fyi, it's Taste of The Wild made for Costco for their private label. My gang has done very well on it for years. It gets a 4 star (out of 5) rating on Dog Food Advisor.

Hope this helps a bit for you guys who think you have a picky eater! Bev