



When bringing home a new puppy or adopting a new adult golden, it is important that you know the information behind feeding a Golden Retriever. Feeding a large breed dog (like a Golden) can be a bit more confusing than feeding a small breed dog due to the dietary requirements of a large breed. With the multiple options available on the market, figuring out what to feed your Golden can be difficult. In a number of the Facebook groups I am a member of, there are many armchair veterinarians that will spout their experiences as fact. Truly, there is no science behind their ideas, they have just read it somewhere else and associated it with their dog. This makes your decision that much harder. This article explains FACTS about dog foods and gives insight on what we recommend. I am not saying that I am an expert. Nonetheless, through research and experience, these are my recommendations.

SO MUCH Information



There is a great deal of information available today when it comes to canine nutrition. On top of all the information you find on the internet, you have the opinion of those in the large pet food stores, the ads on television, and what your best friend feeds their pets. Really, when it comes down to it, you must figure out what you are the most comfortable with when feeding your four-legged family member. Feeding Golden Retrievers is something that I continually research as it is important for me to make sure our dogs get everything they need in their diets.

Most owners want to do what is best for their puppy/dog. The following information is to help you decide what to feed your four-legged family member. Over the years, I have had tremendous success with my feeding plan(s). Whether I am feeding a Pomeranian, a Heeler, a Golden Retriever, a Dachshund, a Great Dane, or any other breed, I have always done my research. Always know that the information I provide comes from my experience, extensive research, and collaboration with my vet.



proven view of the issue. Avoid foods that contain lentils and/or peas in the first eight to ten ingredients. All the grain-free diets fall in this category. It is an informative read if you are really trying to figure out what is best when feeding your Golden. Additionally, I have created a "Safe" foods list that is also available on my website.

Different Dietary Options

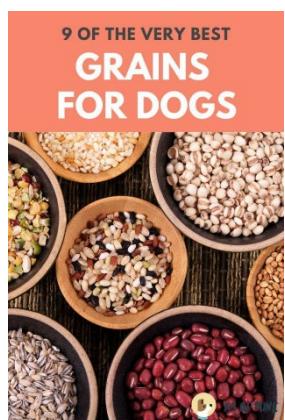
Grain-Free Diets

Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending how you look at it), this is a topic I am extremely passionate about. When grain-free dog foods first hit the market, it was not an option found in almost any brand available. The grain-free diets started to show up around 2008.

However, they did not become incredibly popular until around 2012. In the last five years, every dog food company has jumped on the band wagon and created their own version of grain-free food. It is possible that manufacturers first created these foods to assist our canine companions. Initially, it is likely that a pet food manufacturer developed this specialized food to cater to dogs with severe allergies to common ingredients such as corn, wheat, and in some cases, rice. However, over the years, it has spiraled out of control.

When researching the multiple different philosophies associated with feeding a large breed dog, you can find advice concerning calcium content, protein content, fat content, kcals, and more online. Now, newer studies concerning DCM and grain-free foods have made all the information even more intimidating.

I have authored a complete article concerning the DCM and Diet argument. It is the scientific and



There is a multifaceted reason as to why this happened. First, the internet...with all this information at our fingertips, we research topics more than we did when we had to go to the library to do so. Second, there are more dog owners out there who consider their dog part of the family. Third, if a company sees that another company is highly profiting from a product, they are going to create their own.

Not the answer for most...

As stated before, there is a reason for grain-free dog foods. However, there are other veterinary diets (made by Royal Canin, Purina, Science Diet) that can help dogs with extensive allergies. Nonetheless, grain-free is NOT the best answer for most dogs.

With the issues with DCM and Golden Retrievers, grain-free is not the answer for this breed – EVER. Due to advertising propaganda, dog food companies have made owners believe that dogs do not need/eat grains. They have made owners believe that the best way to feed a dog is like it is a human in dog food form. This is not the case in either instance. Even wild dogs eat grains.

The ingestion of grains helps with proper digestion, gastrointestinal health, and are a reliable source of carbohydrates. If you want to feed your dog like it is a human, more power to you. However, you need to feed your dog properly prepared “human” food to do so. Would you open a bag of dog food and start eating the kernels like potato chips? If not, then grain-free dog food is not truly human-grade food.

The RAW/BARF Diet



The trend of a raw diet originated through a veterinarian in Australia who said that feeding domesticated dogs to mimic that of a wild dog's diet would be a good step for our pets. However, MANY other veterinarians STRONGLY disagree with this man. In addition, not only do other veterinarians not agree, the FDA also does not support this diet. According to the propaganda, the benefits of this diet are healthier skin and teeth, shiny coats, and additional energy. Adding a once-daily omega oil capsule, Nzymes™, and/or a multivitamin to a dog's diet can provide each of these benefits.

Negative Aspects of the BARF Diet

- threats to the health of both dog and their human due to bacteria in the food
- an unbalanced diet for the dog that can lead to additional health issues
- gastrointestinal complications

Traditional Commercial Dog Foods

Believe it or not, this is the best bet for your dog's diet. When feeding your Golden, unless you want to cook for your dog every day, this is the avenue you should choose. Dogs, although once considered just a companion animal, have become an integral part of the family. Many people care about what they feed their dog as much as they care about what they feed themselves (if not more...lol). As a result, new dog food companies are coming out of the woodwork. There is a reason that the most reputable companies have been around for decades. In all reality, the rule of thought is, “if it is not broke, don't fix it.”

There is a reason some of these companies have been in business for a minimum of fifty years. It is undeniable that many, if not most of these companies, have had a recall in their past. However, there are younger companies that have already had recalls, in addition to MANY other issues.



How to Choose a Food

Myth 1: The more it costs, the better the food.

In no way is this the case. Take Blue Buffalo, Acadia, Fromm, Canidae, or Blue Wilderness for example. These foods are all on the FDA list for foods linked to **Diet-Associated DCM**. There are companies that have even had class-action lawsuits drawn against them for pet deaths.

However, all these foods cost approximately \$4.00 to \$6.00 a pound. In truth, you are paying for all their propaganda advertising. You are NOT paying for the actual quality of the product.



This argument is strengthened when you look at the fact that you can find foods from much more established companies (like Purina or Bil-Jac) who sell their premium foods at approximately \$1.80 – \$3.50 a pound. Companies like Victor, who have specific recipes that are well blended and balanced foods which come out to \$2 a pound. Even with Eagle Pack, which is great food with a low advertising presence, their foods do not go above \$2.5 a pound.

It should be completely evident that the COST of dog foods is not always associated with its quality. Later in the article, we will come back to the dog food discussion concerning sensitive stomachs.

Myth 2: The newer companies are more “up to date” on what dogs need.

First you need to choose a WELL -ESTABLISHED company – This means you need to purchase dog food from a major manufacturer. These include Purina, Iams, Diamond, Eukanuba, Eagle Pack, Royal Canin, Nutro, Bil-Jac, Victor, and Science Diet. Stay away from those companies that have started adding new additives and recipes while telling the public they are better than the tried-and-true recipes. A number of these newer recipes are linked to Diet Related DCM and are made by Blue Buffalo, Rachel Ray, Blue Wilderness, Taste of the Wild, Fromm, Acana, or Orijen.



Myth 3: All recipes by “reputable” companies are DCM safe.

This is untrue. Although there are multiple recipes by Blue Buffalo, Blue Wilderness, Rachel Ray, etc. that are associated with DCM ingredients,

there are a few recipes by other, older, and extremely trusted companies that I will not feed my dogs due to their new recipes. As a result, it is important that you look at the actual ingredients when you are choosing a puppy/dog food. On the “DCM approved food list” on my website, I have already taken the time to look through these ingredients and deemed them “safe” within the DCM food rules. If you see a brand on the list, but not a specific recipe, it is because I have found ingredients I stay away from when feeding my dogs within the first ten ingredients.



Myth 4: Dogs do not need Grains.

Grain Free is NOT the Key – If the food you are looking at is Grain-Free, look at something else. Grain-free diets do not benefit dogs in any way. If your dog has a grain allergy, find a food with a different grain (rice) or a veterinary diet. Stay away from diets that have peas, potatoes, and lentils in the first ten to twelve ingredients.

Myth 5: All By-Products and Meals are Bad.

Look at the ingredients – When you are purchasing your

puppy/dog’s food, you want to look at the actual ingredients. It is best for your pet if the main ingredient is actual meat or a specific meat meal. Meat meal is not actually bad for dogs, it has its benefits...if it is actual meat, such as lamb or chicken, and not a generic term such as “bone” or “meat.” There will often be a meat by-product of in most foods. This is normal and used for fat/protein content. For the by-product to be the second or third ingredient is common.

Myth 6: The ingredients matter more than the Guaranteed Analysis

- calcium levels to be between 0.9% and 1.2%.
- protein levels to be between 23% and 28% for adults and 26% and 34% for puppies
- fat levels to be between 12% and 20% – Yes, this is a HUGE gap. It depends on the exercise level and stomach sensitivity of your dog. If he/she runs for hours every day, they will need more fat than the dog that stays in a crate for 8 hours a day.
- Joint supplements are beneficial but are also available in the form of pills or powdered supplements.

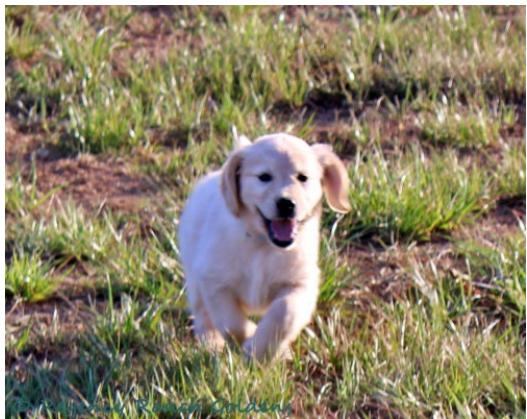
INGREDIENTS

TURKEY & VENISON RECIPE

PRIMARY INGREDIENTS: Turkey, turkey broth, chicken, pork lungs, liver, venison, **ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS AND OTHER INGREDIENTS:** Minerals (potassium chloride, salt, calcium carbonate, zinc sulfate, ferrous sulfate, copper sulfate, manganese sulfate, potassium iodide, sodium selenite), carrageenan, guar gum, vitamins (choline, Vitamin E, Vitamin B-3, Vitamin B-1, Vitamin B-5, Vitamin B-6, Vitamin B-12, Vitamin B-2, Vitamin A, folic acid, Vitamin D-3, Vitamin B-7), locust bean gum.

D421817

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS: Crude Protein (Min) 9.0%, Crude Fat (Min) 8.0%, Crude Fiber (Max) 1.5%, Moisture (Max) 78.0%



Myth 6: Fruits and Veggies make the foods more “complete.”

There are numerous fruits and vegetables that are great for dogs. However, as seen in the DCM research, there is an issue of “too much of a good thing.” If there are ingredients in your dog food that you are not sure are beneficial—LOOK THEM UP. In most cases, dogs do not *need* fruits and veggies. In other cases, there are fruits and veggies that dogs should not have. The common no-no’s are peas, lentils, sweet potatoes, grapes, and onions.

Nonetheless, these ingredients would need to be one of the top ten ingredients on the list to make a significant difference in the diet. Additionally, the truth is your dog is not a human and will still have a complete diet if they do not have portions of fruit or veggies in their dog food. If you want to give watermelon, green beans, or carrots as a treat, there is nothing wrong with that.

Our Suggestions for Feeding Golden Retrievers:

The best choice for your dog is not ONE dog food. The best choice is two to three dog foods mixed into one. This is beneficial for multiple reasons.

1. It gives your dog variety.
2. Not all dog foods are the same. Levels of acidity, calories, carbs, protein, and whole ingredients vary in all foods.
3. No dog food has it ALL. If mixed, there is a higher chance that your dog gets everything he/she needs.
4. Better for your dog’s digestive system. If the body processes different foods, there is less of a chance that your dog will get colitis or pancreatitis.
5. Cost – let us face it, sometimes people get in a jam and paying \$85.00+ for a 35 lb. bag of dog food seems taxing. In cases like this, instead of mixing two of the more expensive “premium” foods, you can mix one expensive food and one less expensive food (if you follow Rule 1 above). This way the food lasts longer and you spend a little less. Once you finish that mixture, you may be able to afford the two “premium” foods once again.

Supplements we add to our dog’s food:

We also choose to give supplements to our dogs. These include Nzymes® Granules and Bac Pak Plus Probiotic. You can find more about the supplements we give our dogs on our website under the “Worth the Read” option.





How/When to Feed: If your puppy comes from Regency Ranch, as your puppy grows, he/she is free-fed. This means that the puppy has access to food 24/7. This should continue once you bring your puppy home. It is important for owners to avoid feeding puppies and dogs on a strict schedule. Dogs, especially puppies, need to eat when they are hungry, and you should not restrict them to scheduled mealtimes. This can help prevent issues such as obesity and food aggression. Instead, owners should focus on providing a balanced diet and monitoring their pet's individual needs. By allowing dogs to eat as needed, they will be healthier and happier overall.

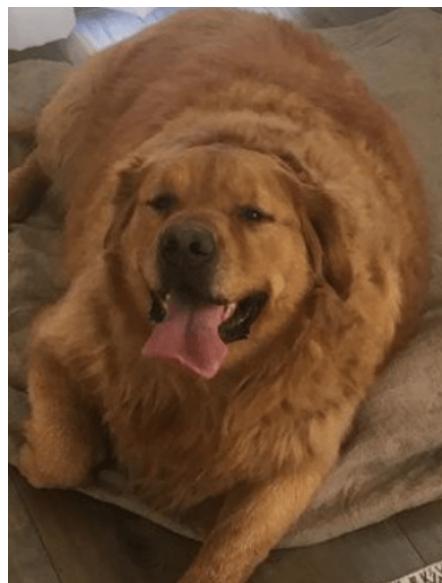
Dogs have the memory of a two-year-old. They get the basic commands, but there is no room in there to process where their next meal is coming from. This is why dogs INHALE their food like a vacuum cleaner when they are on a schedule. The dog is worried that the food will go away. By the time you have set for the dog to be hungry, it could have already become hungry and been waiting for hours.

Overeating...

Feeding on a schedule can cause your dog to WANT to overeat. This means that if your dog ever gets the opportunity to get into the dog food bag, it will devour as much of the food as its little stomach can manage. Then, it will turn around and vomit on your floor or you will be rushing him/her to the vet due to a bad case of colitis or pancreatitis.



With dogs that have access to food 24/7, this is rarely the case. If I open a bag of dog food and walk away, my dogs may take a bite or two and then just ignore it. Why? They know that the food will always be there if they are hungry.



There are those people that may believe that free feeding causes a dog to get fat. This is not the case. If the dog knows the food will be there, it will eat when it is hungry. This allows the dog to "graze" which helps with digestion.

If your dog is gaining weight after being spayed/neutered, change to a light/weight food and up the exercise. Deciding to start scheduled feedings is not the answer as it will cause your dog to believe they are hungrier and they will beg more often, you will end up giving more treats, or they will gorge themselves if they happen to get into their dog food bag/bin.

Feeding Golden Retriever Puppies

When you are feeding your Golden puppy, you need to leave food out 24/7. The only time your pup should not have access to food is over night while

you are potty training. All our pups have had continuous access to food since they could eat on their own. If you try to put your pup on a schedule, this will take time and will be a difficult transition into your home. If you feel it is necessary to feed your puppy on a schedule, they need to eat 4 – 6 times a day until the age of 16 weeks.

Feeding Adult Golden Retrievers

When feeding an adult Golden, your main consideration is how much exercise your dog gets daily. This does not mean that you limit the amount of food available. You will still leave food out 24/7. If your dog is gaining too much weight, you will change the food, not the method of feeding. For a normal/active adult, you can change foods or stick to the same brand(s) that you used for puppy food, just change to the adult, large breed recipe. If your dog looks to be getting fat, choose a food with lower fat content. If you cannot find an adult food



with a lower fat content, then you can move to a “light” or “weight control” diet.

Sensitive Stomachs

Just like humans, there are dogs that have naturally sensitive stomachs. There are also foods and supplements that can help dogs with this issue. Please check out our sensitive stomachs article on our website, www.regencypuppies.com.

Feeding Your Senior Golden



The only change to make once your dog is 7 to 10 years old is the recipe that the dog is fed. If you have not already started your dog on joint supplements, now is the time to do so. In addition, you will change your dog over to a senior diet. According to veterinary medicine, after the age of seven, your dog is a senior. However, not all dogs that are seven need a senior diet and would do better if they stayed on their adult diet. Nonetheless, by nine, your dog

should switch over to senior food. Most, if not all, of the foods I have recommended above have a senior diet available.

Treats

For treats, I recommend giving your dog low sodium, canned green beans, or carrots. Each of these treats will store well in Tupperware containers, they are easy to use for training, they are low in fat, and great for your dog. Now, even though these are healthy treats there is no reason to go overboard. If your sweet baby enjoys

them, you can give them other healthy and safe raw veggies. Safe options include: celery, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, bananas, blue berries, and watermelon.

If you are someone who just likes giving your baby treats another option to consider is offering a small kernel kibble one at a time fed by hand. To many dogs, anything that comes from your hand is better than what is in the bowl. Still, I completely understand if you like to pamper your pup. Below is a list of the best options for your pup/dog found at the store. Please use reason when giving your dog treats.

Studies have shown that there are specific types of chews and rawhide that can be damaging to a dog's digestive tract. This includes most of those dental chews that turn gooey when they are chewed. If you want to use a "chew" when giving treats, we recommend using one of the following:

- [Oinkies](#)
- [Dream Bone](#)
- [Busy Bone](#)
- [Munchy Bones](#)
- [Purina Chewnola](#)
- [Puppy Teething Ring](#)



The Truth...

I have laid out my beliefs and experiences when it comes to feeding your Golden.

However, I support you if you feel like you would like to do your own research. Nonetheless, please do not feed a specific dog food just because your best friend feeds it or because it is the most expensive food you could find. Please remember:

- If you are going to research, do A LOT of research. Do not go to a site that "scores" dog foods or states which dog foods are the best.
- Just because a specific dog food costs more, does not mean it is better.
- What is best for humans is not necessarily what is best for dogs.
- Do not believe the advertisements you see on TV. They are there to sell you something, not teach you.
- Stick with the companies that truly know what they are doing. If they have not been in business for at least 30 years, stay away from them.
- Last, but not least, please do not forget that I am always here if you would like to talk about anything concerning one of our pups. I am here to support you when you have questions.

About the Author

I have been working with animals for as long as I can remember. Throughout my teens, undergraduate, and graduate school, I worked as a veterinary technician. From 2007 – 2011, I owned and ran a registered dog rescue where we worked with the dogs that needed rehabilitation before placement in a forever home. In addition, I have been breeding dogs since 1998. Through all of this, I have consistently researched to keep myself apprised of the latest information concerning canine health and care. As a college professor I believe that knowledge is beneficial, and I try to share it when I can. I put my heart and soul into my small breeding program. God, my family, my pups, and my extended fur-family are what brings me happiness.

Disclaimer: The information provided on this page was not written by a veterinarian or a certified animal nutritionist. I am a breeder who cares for my dogs, has done thousands of hours of research, and has learned from trial and error. I have chosen to share this information with you. Nevertheless, you must make your own decisions. If you choose to follow noted recommendations, then that is your choice. Regency Ranch and/or its representatives hold no liability if results are not as expected. This information is not given to diagnose or prescribe. If your pet has a medical

The Ultimate Guide to Golden Feeding and Nutrition

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