

The idea of natural feeding, or "BARF" diet, is to feed a diet that is close to that which dogs would eat in the wild.

Most people feeding this way use the book "Give Your Dog a Bone" by Ian Billinghurst as a starting point, although many now consider his views out of date.

There are also excellent email groups including BritBarf@yahoogroups.com , RawPup@yahoogroups.com and gold-retBARF@yahoogroups.com

The diet is based on raw meaty bones, that is bone that is 50% meat 50% bone, most people use chicken carcasses as a base for the diet as these are the easiest to get hold of. Chicken wings are also very good, and we also feed lamb breast, necks, and ribs. The idea is that the dogs eat the whole thing, therefore we do not feed weight-bearing bones, which are too big for the dogs to eat. (legs etc.)

Although it is possible to feed this method by buying from a supermarket, most people get their main ingredients from a butcher, the bits you need are the bits he pays someone to take away, and so he will probably be glad to give them to you!!

These meaty bones are always fed raw; dogs digest them even though sometimes they may appear to swallow them whole! Cooked bones are VERY dangerous.

The principle of this method of feeding is to replicate the whole animal that a dog in the wild would kill. Therefore as well as meaty bones we need to feed the muscle meat that an animal would have.

Whilst I'm sure our dogs would love to have leg of lamb, chicken breast, and topside of beef, in practice this is not possible! Instead of muscle meat we feed a range of minces from www.landywoods.co.uk Including tripe, meat & veg, and beef.

Landywoods offer a good quality product at a reasonable price, helpful advice and an efficient delivery service. They also sell a range of meaty bones.

Our adults are fed once a day, at teatime, and meals alternate between meaty bones and mince. Liver is also given once a week. Although not actually a "natural" food our dogs occasionally have a handful of "Natural Choice Wholebake Holistic Health Meal" added to their mince.

To start with everyone worries whether their dogs are getting a balanced diet, but the whole idea of this diet is that it is balanced over a period of time. Therefore you could in theory feed chicken every day for a week, then lamb every day for a week, then tripe every day, but over a period of time this would be balanced!

Of course you can always add other tasty treats in small amounts, raw eggs are particularly beneficial, but dogs also enjoy veg, yoghurt, fish etc.

Amounts are difficult to quantify, but as a guide feed 2-3% of adult body weight and adjust if your dog seems over/under weight.

The rewards of the diet are many, its cheap, the dogs love it and are far more satisfied, they have very clean teeth, and very important as they are digesting more of the food they do far fewer poos, which do not smell!!!

Typical diet for a 65lb. Messano Golden Retriever!

MONDAY	2/3 chicken carcasses
TUESDAY	1 pack minced tripe and a chunk of liver
WEDNESDAY	lamb ribs
THURSDAY	1 pack minced beef with a small handful of Natural Choice
FRIDAY	2/3 chicken carcasses
SATURDAY	1 pack tripe with a raw egg
SUNDAY	lamb neck