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The role of vegetables and fruit in the healthy canine diet.

By: [Julia Henriques](#) -

Dr Billinghamurst wrote the groundbreaking book Give Your Dog A Bone in 1993 and Grow Your Pups With Bones in 1998.

He's famous for creating the concept of BARF (Bones and Raw Food or Biologically Appropriate Raw (or Real) Food), and in 2001 he released his third book The BARF Diet.

We couldn't think of a better canine nutrition expert to clarify this question.

At the 2015 Raw Roundup Conference, Dr Billinghamurst gave a talk on the role of vegetables and fruit in the healthy canine diet.

Dr Billinghamurst highly recommends giving vegetables and fruits to your dog. In the course of his talk, he discussed 10 great reasons to feed your dog veggies and fruit.

(Note: Healthy foods nourish your dog from the inside out and give their immune system what it needs to stay strong.

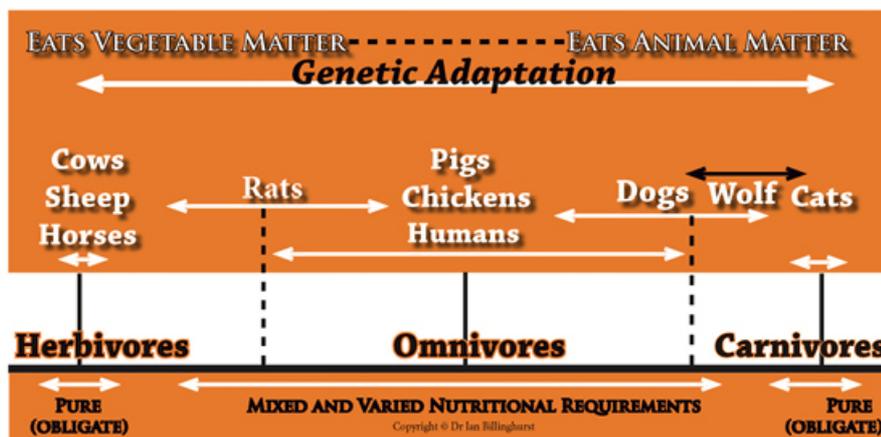
[Click here](#) to find out how to keep your dog's gut healthy.)

Q. Why vegetables and fruit's in the dog's diet?

#1 Evolution – Dogs eat vegetables naturally.

Check out where dogs are on the herbivore-carnivore continuum. They're not obligate or pure carnivores and they're definitely not pure herbivores ... they're midway between omnivores and carnivores.

The Herbivore - Carnivore Continuum



Dogs, wolves and dingoes have eaten vegetables for hundreds of years. Wild canines eat the gut contents of their prey. They scavenge fruit and other vegetable material. Dogs scavenge at garbage dumps. Modern dogs eat household scraps and may even dine at your compost heap!

#2 Vegetables help alkalize the body.

Balancing the alkalinity and acidity of the diet is important to your dog's health.

Organs like the liver, pancreas, gallbladder, hormones, heart, kidneys function better in a more alkaline environment.

Too much acidity can contribute to inflammation which is responsible for a lot of chronic diseases.

Proteins like meat make the body **more acidic**, while most vegetables and some fruits have an **alkalinizing effect on the body.**

ALKALINE OR ACID FORMING FOODS

Moderate to Strong Alkaline-Forming		Moderate to Strong Acid-Forming	
Watermelon	Apples	Alcohol	
Lemons	Apricots	Soft drinks (pop)	
Cantaloupe	Alfalfa sprouts	Tobacco	
Celery	Avocados	Coffee	
Limes	Bananas	White sugar	
Mango	Garlic	Refined Salt	
Honeydew	Ginger	Artificial sweeteners	
Papaya	Peaches	Antibiotics (and most drugs)	
Parsley	Nectarines	White flour products (including pasta)	
Seaweed	Grapefruit	Seafood	
Watercress	Oranges	White vinegar	
Asparagus	Most herbs	Barley	
Kiwi	Peas	Most boxed cereals	
Pears	Lettuce	Cheese	
Pineapple	Broccoli	Most beans	
Vegetable juices	Cauliflower	Flesh meats	
		Most types of bread	

#3 Range of nutrients.

Vegetables provide proteins, lipids, fats, carbohydrates, phytonutrients and fiber, **making them a complete food** – at least for herbivores like cows, sheep and rabbits.

Q. But it doesn't mean your dog can thrive as a vegetarian.

Dr Billingham does not recommend a vegetarian diet for your dog.

First, it would be difficult to feed enough vegetables to fully nourish the dog.

Second, you'd need to add some grains and legumes **to provide a proper balance of amino acids.**

Then to know - But grains and legumes are high in carbohydrates, **which can aggravate a number of disease conditions.**

Then to know - Protein sources like meat and muscle meats provide a full array of amino acids.

WHAT NUTRIENTS DO VEGETABLES SUPPLY?

Overview

- Proteins, Lipids, Carbohydrates, Water
- Minerals, Vitamins
- Protective nutrients ("Phytonutrients")
 - more than antioxidants
 - More than Enzymes
- Fiber

A COMPLETE FOOD?



#4 Water.

Fruit and veggies **are an excellent source of water.**

Many dogs today live in a chronic state of dehydration, which contributes to problems such as kidney disease or the formation of bladder stones.

#5 Vitamins.

Raw vegetables provide most vitamins, including:

Most of the B vitamins (but are low in B12, B1 (Thiamine) or Choline, so your dog needs foods like **liver and eggs to supply these nutrients**).

Vitamin C and co-factors: dogs make their own vitamin C **but need the co-factors that help the body use it.**

Vitamin A, E and K.

There's not much vitamin D in vegetables and dogs don't have enough bare skin to absorb it from the sun like we humans do.

So again, dogs **need liver to supply vitamin D.**

#6 Minerals.

Dark leafy green vegetables contain important minerals like **calcium, potassium and magnesium.**

Vegetables like alfalfa and seaweed are also **good sources of minerals.**

Alfalfa roots go 40 feet down into the subsoil and absorb minerals from the earth.

Seaweed picks up minerals and **micronutrients that are washed into the sea.**

Organic or synthetic foods.

Make sure these foods are organic, not produced with synthetic fertilizers.

Know this! >> Today alfalfa is a major genetically modified (GMO) crop so it's even more important to find a certified organic source.

#7 Omega-3.

Grasses and algae (phytoplankton) have a full complement of essential fatty acids and are rich in Omega-3 (even more so if they're grown in a cold climate).

Omega-3 reduces inflammation and supports the brain and central nervous system, as well as breathing, circulation, digestion, immunity and reproduction.

When dogs are too high in Omega-6, it can impair these functions, so balancing the diet with Omega-3s is important.

While many people feed fish oils, they are very unstable and can turn rancid easily, **so feeding plant based Omega-3s like phytoplankton is a good way to give your dog these essential fatty acids.**

Omega-3 helps slow degeneration and aging.

#8 Phytonutrients.

Phytonutrients are *only* in vegetable material.

Phytonutrients are protective.

They include enzymes, antioxidants and anti-inflammatory molecules (read more about these below).

Phytonutrients are antiviral, antifungal, antibacterial, antihelminthic (anti-worms), anti-aging, anti-degeneration and, most importantly, anti-cancer.

Know this! And yet most kibble-fed dogs get **none** of these nutrients!

Enzymes.

Enzymes in food **help digestion.**

Tropical fruits like pineapple (containing **bromelain**) and papaya (**papain**) are especially beneficial.

“Some” enzymes escape the hydrochloric acid in the stomach and are absorbed whole.

When this happens they're also anti-aging, anti-degeneration and pro-health in your dog's body!

Antioxidants.

Vegetables, fruits and herbs are chock full of antioxidants.

Antioxidants protect against free radicals (unstable molecules that are a major cause of aging) and again, **you can only get them from fruits and vegetables.**

Anti-Inflammatory Molecules.

Anti-inflammatory molecules include **herbs like turmeric, all kinds of berries, and Omega-3 fatty acids.**

Omega-3 isn't anti-inflammatory on its own, but it drives the anti-inflammatory effects of Omega-6, which is why dogs need both.

#9 Fiber.

Raw vegetables supply healthy fiber.

Vegetable fiber is far better and much healthier than fiber from grains. Vegetables contain **soluble fiber**, which is digested by microbes in the large bowel.

Insoluble fiber bulks out the food and helps it pass through the colon.

Fiber is **vital** in older dogs in treating and preventing degenerative disease.

#10 Vegetables help treat disease.

Most important of all, Dr Billingham has found that vegetables **help treat all degenerative disease processes.**

He says vegetables **are especially important in treating serious diseases like cancer and kidney disease.**

DISEASES THAT BENEFIT FROM VEGETABLES' UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS...

- Cancer,
- IBD,
- Arthritis
- Renal
- Hepatic
- Obesity
- Allergies
- Constipation
- Growth Problems Large Breeds
- Pancreatic disease
 - Diabetes mellitus,
 - Pancreatitis,
 - Pan. Insufficiency
- Any/All Degenerative Disease Processes

Q. How to feed vegetables.

Dr Billinghamurst recommends feeding vegetables to your dog, starting with puppies at about six weeks old.

Feed vegetables as about **10-15% of your dog's diet.**

For therapeutic reasons in treating illness, Dr Billinghamurst might prescribe vegetable content in the diet can be as high as **50%.**

The key - Feed them raw and pulverized.

Dr Billinghamurst says vegetables **must be fed raw for maximum benefits**, but you'll need to crush or pulverize them in a juicer or blender, or your dog won't be able to digest them.

Chopping or grating isn't enough to **make** them digestible.

Use whatever vegetables are in season, feeding lots of variety.

Avoid **onions, legumes, macadamias and avocados**, which can be toxic to dogs.

In case you're wondering about **garlic**, it's safe when used in moderation **and has many health benefits** ... here's [more information on garlic.](#)

Don't overfeed vegetables in the **cabbage family** because they can depress the thyroid.

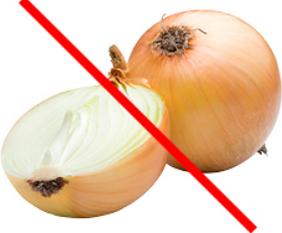
It's also best to avoid starchy vegetables like potatoes and legumes like peas.

Potato *skins* contain **a lot of nutrients and you can feed those pulverized.**

Just make sure the skins aren't green because that makes them toxic.

VEGETABLES TO AVOID

- No onions
- Legumes? (better if sprouted)
- Potatoes? (Skins!)
- No macadamias, no avocados
- NOT TOO MUCH cabbage family
- No Grains (unless sprouted)



Fruit must be fed **ripe** or it can cause diarrhea.

Be careful about **PIPS** in fruit like plums as they can cause blockages.

Don't overfeed fruit to **diabetic dogs** or if your dog is very inflamed.

Dr Billinghamurst recommends incorporating veggies and fruit into your dog's raw diet by mixing them with ground raw meaty bones.

Here are some other food choices he suggests adding as well.

HOW DO WE USE THIS PULPED VEGETABLE MATERIAL?

- Add ground raw meaty bones
- Add some healthy polyunsaturated oil?
- Add a vitamin E supplement?
- Add a B complex supplement?
- Add an egg or two?
- Some liver or heart or kidney?
- Some kelp?
- Some lemon juice or apple cider vinegar
- Some yoghurt or non dairy probiotic
- Refrigerate or FREEZE the excess
- Do not keep unrefrigerated too long ...

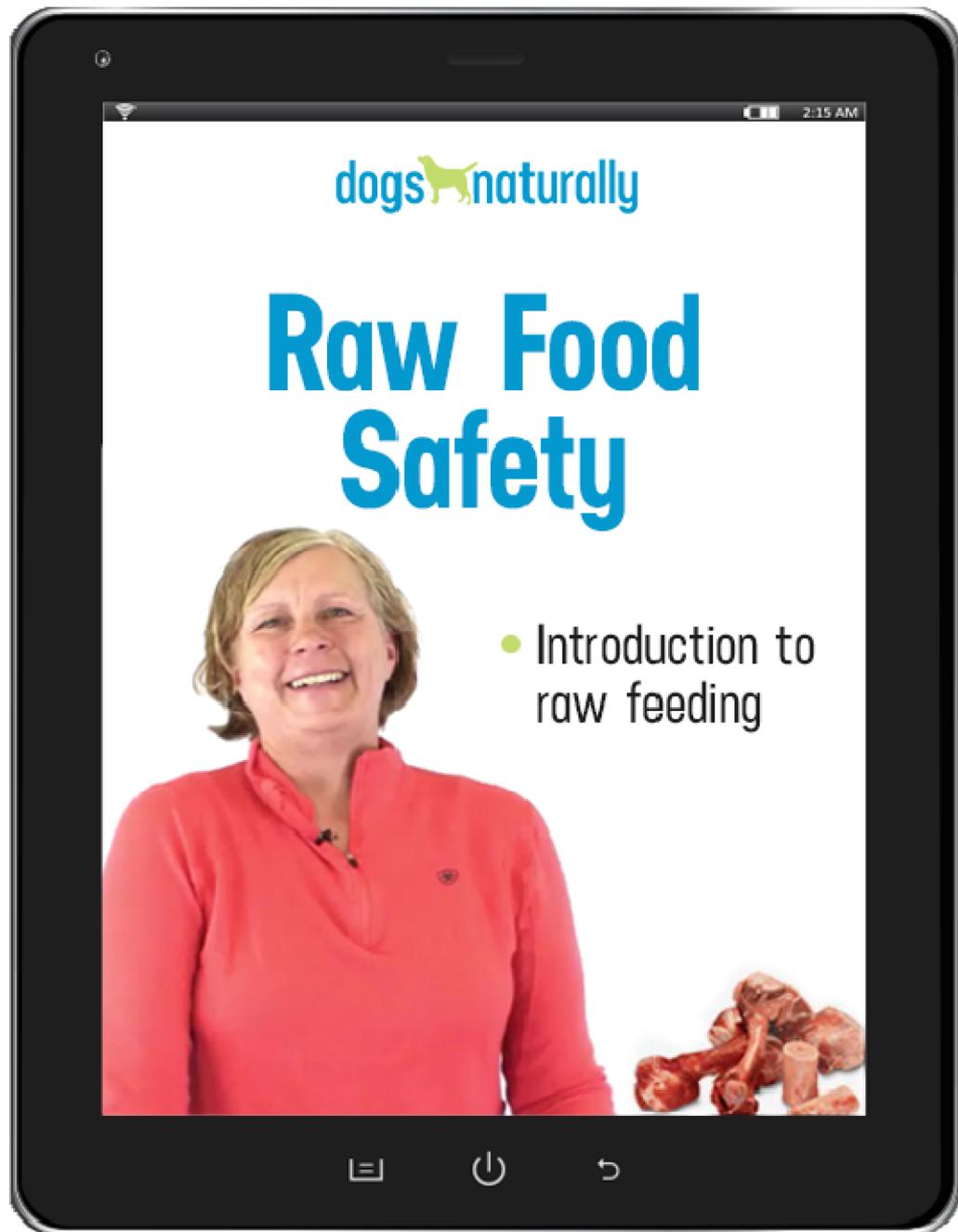
BARF!



If your dog isn't **on a raw diet**, they can still benefit from getting the **extra nutrients from some fresh whole foods**.

In summary, *Dr Billinghamurst* says that it's not absolutely essential to feed dog's fruit and veggies, but there are many life stages and health states where feeding vegetable material **can have major advantages**.

([Download our Free Leaky Gut Workbook](#) and get 3 simple steps to restore your dog's health.)



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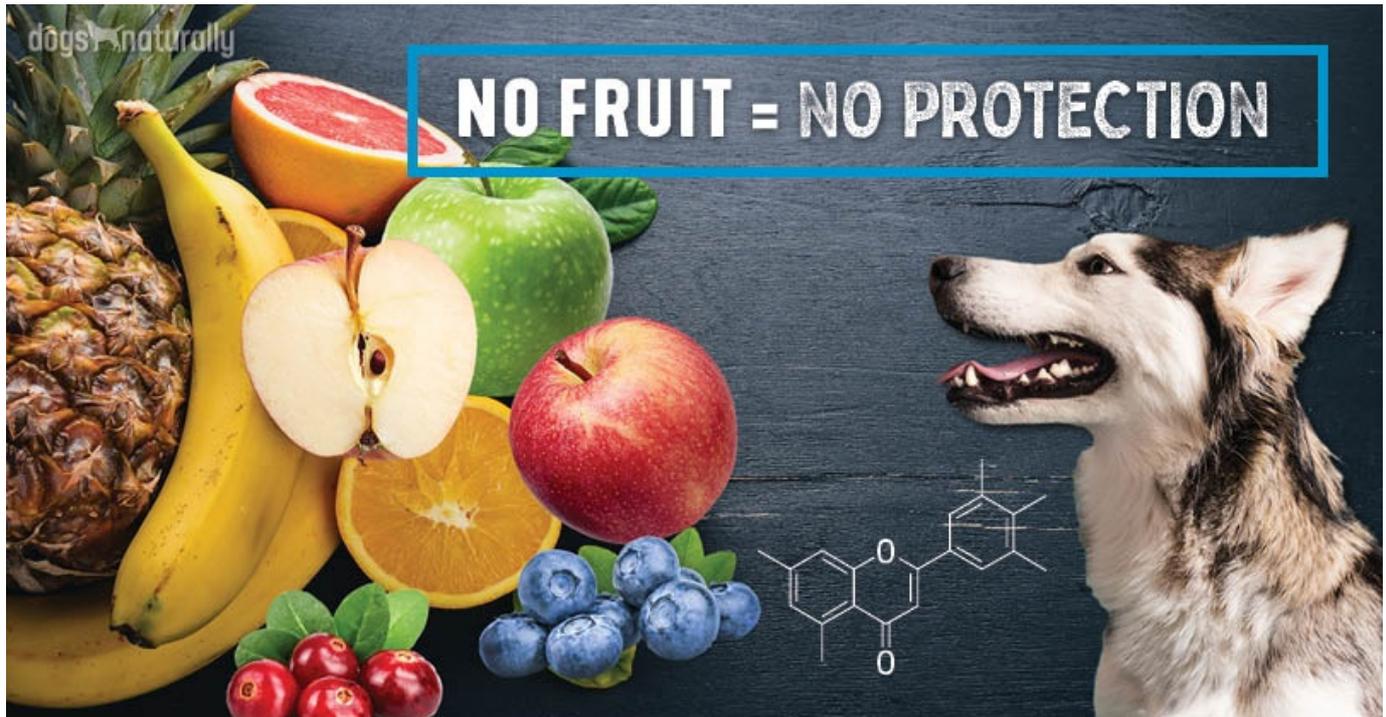
[Julia Henriques](#)

Julia Henriques is Managing Editor of Dogs Naturally Magazine. She's on the Board of Playing Again Sams (Wisconsin Samoyed Rescue) where she enjoys helping adopters and group members choose more natural health care options for their dogs. She lives in Chicago with her partner Marc and two rescue Samoyeds.

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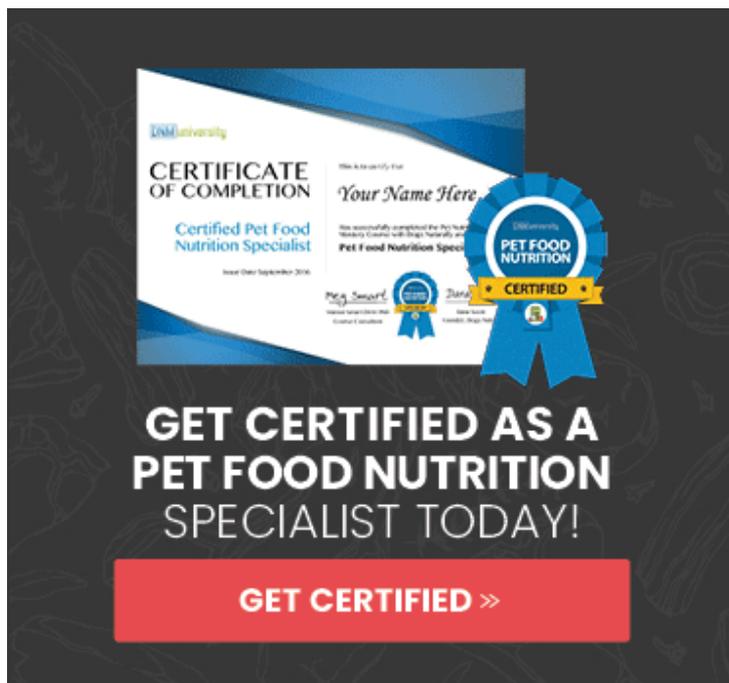


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