



NATURAL FOOD FOR PETS DOG | CAT | RABBIT



FACT SHEET

FEEDING PREGNANT & NURSING BITCHES

Good nutrition is essential for pregnant and nursing bitches as they need extra nutrients and energy during these physically demanding phases.

Pregnancy and nursing

The gestation period for a dog is 9 weeks but the most important stage of the bitch's pregnancy is the last third, from six weeks onwards. This is when over 75% of the puppy's weight develops. As the puppies grow larger, your bitch's stomach capacity will reduce so smaller, more frequent meals of a higher calorie puppy diet are recommended. Bitches will need 30-60% more energy (depending on the size of the litter) than normal during the last 3 weeks of pregnancy.

Although your bitch will gain weight before whelping (giving birth), allowing her to become obese can have serious health implications for her and the puppies.

Once the puppies are born and your bitch is producing milk her energy needs will be at their highest. She'll need 2-4 times more food than she normally requires for maintenance.

Food should be offered frequently throughout the day, in manageable portions.

The Burns Range

A healthy bitch does not require a different diet prior to mating or even for the first 5-6 weeks of gestation. However, for the last 3 weeks before whelping she'll require a more energy-dense diet and will need to stay on this when nursing her puppies.

We have five higher calorie diets which can be used for breeding bitches. These include our three puppy diets and our Active recipe. The correct diet depends on each individual bitch so we recommend you speak to our nutritionists before changing food. Puppy Mini is most suitable for smaller breeds and for bitches which have experienced overly large puppies in the past (larger puppies can be harder for the bitch to deliver; if they get stuck, veterinary intervention is vital).

What to feed?

A healthy bitch does not require a different diet prior to mating or even for the first 5-6 weeks of gestation. However, for the last 3 weeks before whelping she'll require a more energy-dense diet and will need to stay on this when nursing her puppies. A higher calorie diet is normally recommended but some dogs may need a moderate calorie diet if they have experienced overly large puppies in the past (larger puppies can be harder for the bitch to deliver; if they get stuck, veterinary intervention is vital).

Vitamins and Minerals

Unless advised by your vet, vitamin and mineral supplements are not recommended, as complete puppy diets contain all the nutrients your bitch needs. Additional supplements can cause health problems. For example, excessive amounts of calcium during gestation can cause eclampsia in the bitch once she has whelped.



NATURAL FOOD FOR PETS DOG | CAT | RABBIT



FACT SHEET

Feeding the pups

Puppies can start to be weaned from about 3 weeks old. The food should be mixed with warm water and made into a porridge consistency and offered in saucers so they can start to lap at the food. As they get older and are receiving less milk from their mother you can increase the amount of puppy food you offer and start to add less water.

Water & fluids

A large supply of fresh water should always be available for your bitch and her puppies. Your bitch will require much more water during pregnancy and lactation than usual.

Using cow's milk is not suitable as a substitute for water, as it contains a milk sugar called lactose which many adult dogs struggle to digest. Puppies start off with the enzyme needed for lactose digestion, but the activity of this enzyme declines as they get older. Symptoms of a lactose intolerance include strong smelling stools, flatulence and diarrhoea.

For more information please speak to a Burns Nutritionist: 0800 083 66 96

¹Hand, Thatcher, Remillard, Roudebush and Novotny (2010). Small Animal Clinical Nutrition. 5th ed. Kansas: Mark Morris Institute. p284.