



**John Burns** BVMS MRCVS

The idea for **Burns Pet Nutrition** came while working as a Veterinary Surgeon in general practice during the early 90s. I noticed that many pets were suffering from the same ailments time and time again. Believing poor diet to be the primary cause, I recommended that clients feed their dogs home-cooked food to allow the body to function naturally, free from a build-up of toxic waste.

Of course, feeding home-cooked food is a time consuming business, and back in 1993 no brand of healthy pet food existed. This motivated me to develop my own **Original** dry food recipe based on chicken, brown rice and vegetables.

The concept was simple - a complete ready-made diet containing all the benefits of home cooked food.

25 years on, we have a diverse clientele of happy and healthy pets and our product range has evolved to include a number of high-quality diets for dogs, cats and rabbits.

*John Burns*  
Veterinary Surgeon John Burns BVMS MRCVS

**Depraved appetite** A craving to eat substances that are not food is known as **depraved** (corrupt) **appetite**, or **pica** (latin for magpie). The proper term for poo-eating is **coprophagy**.

## Why do dogs eat poo?

The most common misconception is that poo-eating is a sign that something is lacking in the diet. Another misunderstanding is that perhaps the poo contains undigested food.

In my opinion, **coprophagia** (poo-eating) is a symptom of **low-grade ill-health, probably of the digestive system**. This is usually caused by poor quality food, over-feeding or a combination of the two. This applies equally to puppies and adult dogs.

You can read more about **diet and the health of the digestive system** in my *Veterinary Guide to Natural Healthcare* (pp.12-13).

## How can diet help?

**A healthy dog will not be attracted to eat abnormal items such as poo.** Any measure which promotes good health will reduce the likelihood of poo eating.

(i) **A natural, hypo-allergenic diet** fed sparingly will help ensure a healthy digestive system, and a healthy body as a whole. You can read more about **food allergy/intolerance** in my *Veterinary Guide to Natural Healthcare* (pp. 9 -10).

(ii) A **highly digestible diet** reduces the workload of the digestive system so that the digestive process is more efficient.

A bonus of digestible food fed in small amounts, is that less material reaches the lower bowel, meaning less dog waste!

(iii) **Overfeeding** reduces the efficiency of digestion, another important cause of poo eating.

(iv) Production of **waste** is a normal part of the metabolism of the body. If excessive, this becomes toxic to the system.

Keeping things simple avoids the build-up of toxic waste in the system. You can read more in my *Veterinary Guide to Natural Healthcare* (pp. 26-27).

*“Any measure which promotes good health will reduce the likelihood of poo eating.”*



## What can cause dogs to eat poo?

- Poor quality food
- Overfeeding
- Food intolerance
- Excess protein & fat
- Chemicals

Toxic waste  
build-up

Poo  
Eating



## Can I still feed treats?

When trying to eliminate poo eating, it is important, initially, to have as little variety in the diet as possible, i.e. no treats, other pet food brands, fruit or even homemade foods (vegetables are OK). Treats may be introduced at a later stage once the poo eating has been resolved.

## How much food should I give?

Overfeeding contributes to the toxic burden so must be avoided. Recommended feeding amounts should be treated with caution as every dog is an individual with different needs from all others. Weighing the food each time is more accurate and effective than going by eye.

Many pet owners believe that they cannot be overfeeding as their pet is not overweight. Very often that is not correct; waste products can accumulate in the system of a dog which is of normal weight.

**The Burns Health and Nutrition Team** (see back of leaflet) can give you individually tailored advice on finding the right food and the right feeding amounts for your dog

**Or...**

See my **Daily Feeding Amounts** leaflet.

Download it from the Burns website:

([www.burnspet.co.uk](http://www.burnspet.co.uk)) or request a paper copy.





Below is a checklist to help you evaluate and make an informed decision regarding the suitability of a diet...

Key consideration checklist:

Is the diet highly digestible? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does it have controlled levels of protein and fat? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are the ingredients high quality? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the food contain chemical additives or preservatives? ...	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the diet complete? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the diet hypoallergenic? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the diet balanced? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the diet have an identifiable protein source? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are the ingredients natural? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are any of the ingredients artificial? .....	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Top tip!

Don't punish your dogs for eating poo. This can reinforce the behaviour. Try positive reinforcement – clean the poo away and offer your dog a reward (treat, toy or praise) for not eating it – they'll quickly learn that it's more fun not to eat poo.

Poo eating can be more common in dogs that are bored so keep their mind busy with a feeding aid/ball, puzzle bowl or let them learn new skills at an agility, flyball or heelwork to music club.

Remember that every dog is an individual and the causes of poo eating will be different between dogs.

It's important not to lose hope if the first thing you try does not work it may be a case of trial and error or even a combination of things.

Support when you need it

Our expert pet nutritionists can give you straightforward and individually tailored advice on managing nutritional support for specific health problems or fine tuning feeding amounts.



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Promotes excellent health, and for dogs prone to...

- Itchy skin/ears/feet
- Upset digestion
- Weight problems
- Full anal glands
- Persistent moulting
- Behaviour problems
- Lack of vitality
- Stiffness
- Tear staining
- Fussy eating
- Tooth tartar

All of these may be diet related

This leaflet is part of a series on health and nutrition written by John Burns.

For more information please see my **Veterinary Guide to Natural Healthcare** booklet which can be downloaded from [www.burnspet.co.uk](http://www.burnspet.co.uk) or request a paper copy



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THE VETERINARY GUIDE TO  
**POO EATING**  
By John Burns BVMS MRCVS

Coprophagy/Pica

