

THE VETERINARY GUIDE TO  
**POO EATING**

By **John Burns** BVMS MRCVS



*Coprophagy/Pica*



## **John Burns** BVMS MRCVS

While I was working as a veterinary surgeon, I often found the drugs prescribed to treat common pet health conditions only suppressed the symptoms and gave short-term relief. When the drugs stopped, the problem came back. I was convinced that there must be a more natural, long-term solution.

My research into this eventually led me to the conclusion that many of the pet health conditions I was seeing were brought about as a result of lifestyle – especially diet.

(You can read more about my experiences of managing health problems with diet in my *Veterinary Guide to Natural Healthcare*).

Having established the link between health and nutrition, I began advising pet owners to feed their pets a diet of simple home cooked food. This gave remarkable results, with owners seeing dramatic improvements in their pet's health. Although most owners were delighted with the results, many found home cooking to be time consuming and inconvenient.

This motivated me to develop my first dry pet food, **Burns Original Chicken & Brown Rice**, a complete, ready-made diet but with all the benefits of a home cooked food.

That was back in 1993. Since then, our product range has grown to include a number of different high quality recipes and ranges for dogs, cats, rabbits and small animals.

  
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.

Burns foods are natural, wholesome foods, high in complex carbohydrates (especially wholegrains such as brown rice), low in protein and fat and free from additives (other than essential vitamins and minerals)

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

## Which Burns food is best for my dog?

I find many owners stumble from brand to brand in the hope of coming across a food which will help their dog. For most problem dogs, any **Burns Original, Choice** or **Sensitive+** variety will be suitable.

For more difficult cases, the **Burns Health and Nutrition Team** has the knowledge and experience to advise you on how a methodical process can help find the right food for your dog.

For example, one dog may not be suited to chicken but may do well on duck. For another, a potato or maize-based food may be more effective than a rice-based one.



## 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 physical copy.



## Why not try...

### ORIGINAL RANGE

2kg, 7.5kg, 15kg

Life Stage : Adult (including Senior)

Chicken & Brown Rice • Lamb & Brown Rice • Fish & Brown Rice

#### What's **in** Burns:

- ✓ Complex carbohydrate of whole grains
- ✓ Low fat
- ✓ Low protein
- ✓ Hypo-allergenic

#### What's **not** in Burns:

- ✗ Simple sugars
- ✗ Artificial colourings
- ✗ Artificial flavourings
- ✗ Derivatives
- ✗ Wheat/gluten



Developed by Veterinary Surgeon

*John Burns*  
BVMS MRCVS



Healthy  
Skin & Coat



Healthy  
Digestion



Recommended by  
Behaviourists



Avoids toxic  
build-up



Hypo-Allergenic  
& Complete

## Top tip!

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

(ii) Poo eating can be more common in bored dogs so keep their mind busy with a food ball, puzzle bowl or let them learn new skills at an agility, flyball or heelwork to music club.

(iii) If your vet recommends a high fibre diet or your dog is overweight, why not try **Burns Weight Control**?

## 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.

John and the Nutrition Team



...they really know their stuff!

### Right advice



Right  
food

Right  
amount

### Healthy dog, Happy owner

Freephone **0800 083 66 96**

Ireland (freephone) **1800 836696**

Email **info@burnspet.co.uk**

Sales Advice  
Product Advice  
Nutrition Advice

**Live Chat**

Online  
now

[www.burnspet.co.uk](http://www.burnspet.co.uk)



# NATURAL FOOD FOR PETS

DOG | CAT | RABBIT

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

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

*All of these are 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 physical copy*



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