

SHELTER MANAGEMENT

NUTRITION



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DOG SHELTER PANTRY



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Introduction

Proper nutrition is one of the most important aspects of shelter management.

Stray dogs often arrive underweight, malnourished, dehydrated, or suffering from underlying illnesses.

Meeting their nutritional needs not only restores health but also improves behaviour, reduces disease risk, and enhances their chances of adoption.

This manual provides practical guidance for feeding stray dogs in a shelter setting.



Basic Nutritional Requirements of Dogs

Dogs are omnivores with specific dietary needs:

Proteins - Essential for tissue repair, immune function, and growth. Sources: chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, legumes.

Fats - Provide energy and aid absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K). Sources: animal fats, fish oil, sunflower oil.

Carbohydrates - Supply energy and fibre for healthy digestion. Sources: rice, oats, barley, vegetables.

Vitamins & Minerals - Critical for metabolic processes, bone health, and immunity.

Water - The single most important nutrient; fresh water must always be available.



Factors Affecting Nutritional Needs

Age: Puppies, adults, and seniors require different formulations.

Size and breed type: Large breeds need joint-supporting nutrients; small breeds need calorie-dense meals.

Health status: Dogs with injuries, infections, or chronic conditions require tailored feeding.

Body condition: Underweight dogs need gradual weight gain; overweight dogs need calorie control.

Stress level: Shelter stress can increase caloric requirements.



Feeding Guidelines by Life Stage

Puppies (0-12 months)

Require 2-3 times the calories per kg of adults.

Should be fed 3-4 times daily.

Protein content: 22-30% of diet.

Supplement with calcium and phosphorus for bone development.

Adult Dogs (1-7 years)

Feed 2 meals daily.

Balanced diet with 18-25% protein, moderate fat, and digestible carbohydrates.

Avoid excess calories to prevent obesity.

Senior Dogs (7+ years)

Lower calorie intake to prevent weight gain.

Higher fibre to support digestion.

Include omega-3s and joint supplements.



Feeding Dogs with Special Needs

Malnourished or Underweight Dogs

Introduce food gradually to avoid refeeding syndrome.

Provide small, frequent meals with high protein and fat.

Add vitamin/mineral supplements as advised by a vet.

Pregnant and Lactating Dogs

Require up to 3x normal calorie intake.

Provide high-protein puppy food and calcium-rich meals.

Sick or Injured Dogs

Work with a vet to provide therapeutic diets.

Soft, palatable foods are best for dogs with poor appetite.

Add electrolytes to water for dehydrated dogs.

Dogs with Chronic Illness

Feed specialised veterinary diets where possible.

Restrict protein for kidney/liver disease.

Provide hypoallergenic food for dogs with skin/allergy issues.



Practical Feeding in Shelters

Consistency: Feed at the same times each day.

Hygiene: Clean bowls after every meal to prevent disease.

Monitoring: Keep a feeding chart to track intake and weight changes

Group feeding: Avoid it whenever possible; feed individually to prevent fights and ensure each dog eats.

Donations: Use donated food, but check expiry dates and avoid spoiled items.

Home-prepared food: If kibble is not available, prepare meals with rice, meat, and vegetables in balanced portions.



Common Mistakes to Avoid

Feeding cooked bones (risk of splintering).

Overfeeding treats or human food scraps.

Sudden changes in diet (causing diarrhoea).

Ignoring water availability.

Not adjusting diet for age, health, or activity level.



Monitoring and Record-Keeping

Maintain weight records for all dogs.

Use a Body Condition Score (BCS) system (1-9 scale) to track progress.

Report appetite loss, diarrhoea, or vomiting immediately to the shelter vet.



Emergency Feeding Situations

In resource-limited settings:

Combine rice, lentils, and available meat sources.

Supplement with appropriate oils for energy.

Use eggs as an affordable protein source.

Ensure vitamins/minerals through vegetables (carrots, spinach, pumpkin).



Conclusion

Feeding stray dogs in shelters is both a science and a matter of compassion

. By following structured nutritional guidelines, shelters can improve survival rates, reduce illness, and prepare dogs for healthy lives in adoptive homes.



Disclaimer

The information provided in this manual is intended for general guidance on the nutritional care of stray dogs in a shelter environment. I

t is not a substitute for professional veterinary advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Always consult a qualified veterinarian for specific concerns regarding the health and dietary needs of individual dogs.

Dog Desk Animal Action accepts no liability for any adverse effects resulting from the use of this information.