



FEATURE

# Why Real Food Changes Everything, from the First Bowl onwards

Bringing a puppy home is one of the most joyful things a person can do. It is also, quietly, one of the most important. The decisions made in those first weeks and months, including what goes in the bowl, shape a dog's health in ways that echo for years.

There's a world of choice when it comes to finding the right food for your puppy. But the truth is, providing the right food for your pup is a lot simpler than you might think.



## What is fresh feeding, and why does it matter

Fresh feeding means feeding your dog real, whole ingredients, minimally processed and gently cooked to retain their natural nutritional value. Food made from ingredients you'd recognise in your own kitchen, prepared in a way that keeps the good stuff in.



Lyka is a fresh dog food made from human-grade ingredients, designed by board-certified veterinary nutritionists. Every meal is complete and balanced for all life stages, from puppies to seniors. The meals are gently cooked to maximise nutritional value, and delivered direct to your door in custom portions based on your dog's age, weight, breed, and health needs.

Fresh, real food nutrients are absorbed more effectively into your dog's system, boosting their health from the inside out.

## Why the first months matter most

The first six months of a puppy's life is the most significant stage for physical growth and cognitive development. Dogs can take up to 24 months to reach maturity depending on the breed, so they need more nutrients than adults to support their steady and healthy growth.

Puppies are born with a juvenile microbiome and immune system that develop in their first

months of life. A diverse, balanced gut in the early years helps to build a strong and resilient immune system, and is a great way to start them on a journey of preventative and holistic health.

Puppies have small tummies. The ingredients you feed take up invaluable space. Although tiny, they need more daily nutrients than adults to fuel growth at a healthy rate, so balanced, nutrient-dense diets provide the highest possible benefit from the small amounts of food they can fit.

Puppies don't necessarily need "puppy food," but rather the right portion of nutrient-dense food. Quality nutrition is key to raising a healthy and well-adjusted puppy.



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Compared to adults, puppies have slightly higher requirements of certain minerals to support their growing bones and joints. Getting this nutrient balance right is crucial, as puppies can't always limit their absorption of these nutrients, making the formulation of their food particularly important.

At Lyka, we believe that AAFCO standards are the bare minimum. It's enough to support life, but we want all dogs to thrive, not just survive. Lyka meals have been designed by board-certified veterinary nutritionists to go above and beyond AAFCO standards, making them suitable for dogs of all ages and stages of development, including growing puppies.

### Good digestion starts here

When switching to fresh food, one of the first things puppy parents notice is a change in their dog's digestion. And yes, that includes the poos.

When the microbiome is balanced, your dog's digestive system will work efficiently. But when it's disrupted, you may notice symptoms like diarrhoea, constipation, bloating, gassiness, or even skin and behaviour issues.

A balanced diet that includes quality ingredients and dietary fibre can play an important role in supporting gut health in dogs. Fresh food diets formulated with a variety of ingredients help nourish beneficial gut microorganisms, while gently cooked meals can assist with nutrient absorption and digestive health. Many owners also report benefits such as improved stool quality and overall wellbeing when focusing on balanced nutrition for their dogs.

Your dog's microbiome is central to their immune system, hormone regulation, and their gut-brain axis. Good guts don't just improve their poos, they improve their overall health and wellbeing.

Lyka meals are designed by board-certified veterinary nutritionists to provide optimal nutrition and include naturally occurring prebiotics from fibre-rich ingredients like psyllium husk and various fruits and vegetables, which support a healthy gut microbiome.

### Nutritional confidence at every life stage

The right balance of real food nutrients establishes a strong foundation of health for the rest of your puppy's life. Meals made from high-quality protein, healthy fats, fresh fruit and vegetables provide your puppy with highly digestible nutrients that are easily absorbed.

But fresh feeding isn't just for puppies. The same principles that make it valuable in those early months continue to matter as your dog grows.

Usually, puppies will transition to adult dog food when they've reached maturity. However, if they're on a real food diet like Lyka, puppies and adolescents can get more protein and nutrients by eating a bigger portion relative to their size. When they become adults, they receive the same meals but a different serving size.

We believe all dogs should get nutrient-dense food like puppies, which is why adults and seniors are given the same meals, just in custom portions to support and maintain health.

For senior dogs, a real food diet with natural, easy-to-digest nutrients is one of the most powerful tools you have. As your dog grows older, their ability to absorb and digest nutrients declines. By providing highly digestible protein, you can help them maintain muscle mass.





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### Nutritional confidence at every life stage

Older dogs tend to drink less water as they age, making hydration through food increasingly important. Omega-3 fatty acids support healthy brain function, contribute to joint health, and aid in signal transmission between neurons.

A longer, healthier life starts in the bowl, and it starts earlier than most people realise.



### The role breeders play

Breeders have more influence over a puppy's nutritional trajectory than almost anyone else. The foods a puppy is introduced to during the weaning window shape gut microbiome composition, palatability preferences, and feeding behaviour for years.

The handover moment between breeder and new family is one of the most important in a puppy's early life. When families take home a puppy already established on a food they love and digest well, that transition is seamless. The puppy knows the food, the gut is already adjusted, and new owners start from a stable foundation rather than managing a digestive reset on top of everything else that comes with a new dog.

This is why Lyka works closely with breeders as genuine partners. Providing complimentary fresh meals during the weaning period is part of that. So is the education, resources, and ongoing support offered to help breeders have confident conversations with their puppy families about nutrition.

### The Lyka Breeder Program

The Lyka Breeder Program is an example of the type of support available to breeders looking to provide puppies and their new families with additional nutritional resources and education. The program includes benefits such as support during the weaning period, educational materials, access to veterinary guidance, and discounts for both breeders and puppy owners.

Introducing puppies to fresh food early can help families feel more confident in their feeding choices and support a smooth transition into their new homes.

More information is available here: <https://lyka.com.au/breeder-program>

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