

# Pet Care Advice

## Flexitarianism For Dogs—For The Environment, For Their Health And For Your Wallet

(NAPS)—If U.S. dogs and cats were their own country, they'd rank fifth in global meat consumption. In fact, through their diet, our pets constitute about 25–30% of the environmental impacts from animal production in terms of the use of land, water, fossil fuel, phosphate, and biocides in the United States.

Imagine the environmental impact if the 90 million dogs in the United States consumed just 25% less meat-based food?

There are health benefits to flexitarianism, too. A recent study shows that vegan diets for dogs may be linked with better health, and could be less hazardous, than meat-based diets. Statistical analysis of the survey results suggested that, overall, dogs on conventional diets were less healthy than dogs on vegan diets. It stands to reason that even a reduction of meat-based food in a pet's diet will have an impact on overall health, which can lead to a reduction in vet bills (improving the health of your wallet, too.)

According to Dr. Abril Estrada, co-founder and Chief Product officer for Wild Earth, the cruelty-free dog food company, there is a specific impact on allergies, too. When it comes to skin allergies—itchiness, flaky skin, scabs and paw licking—one of the top allergens for dogs is actually chicken. Why?

“When you think about a dog's diet, they're usually eating the same foods over and over every day. Then, think about your dog's lifespan - you started with a food when they were puppies and, when you found one they liked, you kept feeding them that. It is this exposure to the same type of protein over and over that can create an immune response to those proteins—so that's why people that see allergies with a certain type of meat. Rotating protein sources prevents overexposure to the same types of protein over and over again, which causes these issues. That said, it is just as important to rotate your proteins, even if you are feeding a plant-based protein.”



### Here's how.

Whether you are concerned about the environmental impact of meat consumption, or seeking to avoid common food allergies in dogs, flexitarianism may be the answer. For those considering incorporating nutritionally-complete vegan foods into their dog's diet, Dr. Abril encourages pet parents to first discuss options with their veterinarians, and then to be mindful of the importance of a gradual transition to new foods.

If you suddenly feed a full meal (or two) of a higher fiber food, the chances are good your dog will experience some GI upset. The same goes for different proteins, fat content, and even nutrient formulations. The reason this happens turns out to be deeper than the food bowl.

When you change your dog's diet, you also change what you're feeding their gut bacteria or microbiome. Recent research shows that switching diets alters the richness and diversity of the canine microbiome. If this transition occurs abruptly, the gut bacteria may shift dramatically and GI symptoms develop. By easing into a new diet, you allow any changes in gut bacteria populations to occur in a safe—and diarrhea-free—fashion.

If your dog develops any soft or loose stool during the transition, reduce to the last acceptable level for an extra three to four days.

For more information, and to save 50% plus free shipping on your first dog food subscription order, visit [www.WildEarth.com](http://www.WildEarth.com).