

Feeding Your Working Stock Dog

How and what to feed is one of the most common questions from new puppy buyers, as well as owners of adult dogs. We want to address the issue of constant feed in front of your dog, versus once or twice a day feedings.

Our Background - Janice has over 40 years of veterinary experience. Bill has worked professionally with kennels housing and trialing over 80 hunting dogs and has personally owned dogs his entire life, including our current 15 to 18 stock and hunting dogs on the ranch.

Important Recommendation.

We believe you should feed your adult dog either twice a day (morning and night, splitting a single day's ration) or once per day (evenings in our case) an appropriate amount of food for your dog's size and activity level. In the case of a dog that is difficult to keep weight on, feeding twice a day may encourage the dog to eat more than being fed only once a day. This is especially important when your dog is working hard. If feeding twice a day, the smaller amount can be given in the morning, as the dog will work better with a less full stomach. **We strongly recommend this over the practice of leaving a full bowl or bag of food in front of your dog at all times.**

WHY? All our dogs are trained to eat relatively quickly from being a puppy to adulthood. In the course of many

years of having dogs, we have saved the lives of a dozen or more dogs by noting them going off of feed on day one. When we feed our dogs, we give them no more than five minutes to clean up their ration before removing the bowl. By doing this, if one of the dogs is not feeling well, it will be easily observed and we can inspect the dog for problems (serious possibilities include - impacted intestine, twisted gut, ruptured spleen). After noting a change in food consumption, we can immediately take the appropriate step that may be required, either another day of close observation or a quick trip to the local veterinary clinic.

When leaving food in front of your dog all the time, it becomes very difficult to determine the dog's daily consumption. You will more than likely miss a sick dog by a day or two, which may be too late. It can also lead to obese dogs that will perform at a substandard level. Sean Derrig, a highly successful birddog field trialer, favors feeding once per day, as he believes it is the best indicator of a sick or stressed dog, as well as making house breaking much easier.

We know there are finicky eaters in the dog world and that must be taken into account. By training your dog from a young age to eat or lose the bowl, you can most often get around the slow eater syndrome.

The pups that leave our kennel go with the following feeding recommendations.

- We feed Purina Puppy Chow until they are about a year old. Long time professional dog trainer, **Sherry Ebert**, stresses that young pups should be fed three times a day until at least four months of age, then twice a day until ten to twelve months old.
- We then switch to a high protein quality dog food (your choice) that we moisten with cold or warm water, depending on the time of year. We add water as it helps in consumption and digestion. We may add canned or fresh meat if the dog is working hard. Any time you change the food being fed, make a gradual transition over a seven to ten day period to avoid digestive upsets. Sometimes staying with the same dog food company allows for a faster transition.
- **Warning!** Never purchase dog food (or any items for your dog – chew toys, etc.) that you do not know the origin or where it is processed. There have been horrible cases of dog food and chew animal parts coming from China and other foreign countries that have literally poisoned dogs, either making them ill or, in some cases, killing the animal.
- If you have a question on what adult food you should feed, ask a veterinarian or respected professional dog handler or breeder for their recommendation. A good

food should be eaten well and result in a dog with a good weight, shiny coat and well-formed stool. Dogs may require different foods during their lifetime based on their age, activity level and medical conditions.

We have added this to our Web and Facebook sites to help guide you toward providing a long and healthy life for your working dog. A big thanks goes to Sherry Ebert and Sean Derrig for reviewing and making suggestions for this feeding document.