**Feeding Basics**

**Finicky Eating.** Sometimes it can be hard to get a dog to eat his complete and balanced dog food. This can be a problem, especially if it means your dog is not getting enough nutrition or is getting the wrong nutrition from somewhere else.

**What Is Finicky Eating?** As a rule, finicky eating is when a dog will only eat certain things. It is sometimes manifested in a dog who refuses to eat the complete and balanced dog food you offer or doesn't eat enough. Finicky eaters usually do so out of preference, but you should keep in mind that dogs might also refuse to eat because of a medical condition.

Also keep in mind environmental factors. Many pet owners comment that their dogs eat less during hot weather. This is not unusual. Studies show that, as a general rule, dogs need about 7.5 percent fewer calories with each 10 degree rise in temperature.

**Change in Diet.** One possible cause of finicky eating is a sudden change in diet. Some tips on making diet changes more tolerable:

* Before leaving the breeder, pet store, or Humane Society, find out what type, flavor, and brand of food your dog has been eating. Acquire some of this food.
* If the food your dog has been eating is acceptable to you, continue feeding it.
* If you want to switch your dog to a new food at any time, begin with a day or two of feeding the same food he had before.
* Then mix that food with your chosen brand or flavor for a few days, slowly decreasing the amount of old food and increasing the amount of new. This should take about a week or a little more.
* Do this any time you change foods or your dog may develop gastrointestinal upset.

**Making Food More Palatable.** If your dog doesn't like the new food, hang in there and try to make it more appealing.

* If you've chosen dry food, add a little water to moisten it.
* If you serve a moist food, warm it a little.
* Allow your dog time to adjust.
* If he still won't eat it, you may want to try a new food.
* If he won't eat that, have a talk with your veterinarian. You may be experiencing a complete refusal to eat.
* Mix a little wet with the dry to entice. Slowly decrease wet until he's back to only dry.

**Scheduling and Controlling Diet.** An indulgent family member rather than the pet may be the problem. By feeding human treats and food from the table, your pet's hunger is satisfied with all this people food and it either refuses to eat or nibbles only a few bites of the food it should be eating.

* Don't feed your dog people food and if you feed treats, do so sparingly and reduce the amount of complete and balanced dog food you offer to accommodate the extra calories.
* Make sure your dog isn't eating somewhere else. The garbage can is a common temptation for dogs. Keep garbage out of reach; not only might it reduce your dog's appetite for dog food, it can cause a host of other problems, including diarrhea.
* Scheduling specific feeding times throughout the day is beneficial. Your dog will know when food is coming and will learn to eat at that time.

If none of these tips help, ask your veterinarian to examine your dog for other conditions that may be leading to these eating habits, especially if your dog seems to be unexpectedly losing weight.