



The Ultimate Guide to Feeding Your Great Dane Puppy

Giant dog breeds like the Great Danes are well known for many things; their noble stature, their sheer physical presence - and in particular, the amount of food they eat. Owners of Great Dane puppies are often thrust into the world of canine nutrition without knowing much about the pros and cons of different foods, diets, and perspectives on dietetics.

Great Dane puppies grow at an exponential rate, often capable of doubling their weight from 5-8 pounds at 4 weeks of age, to on average, approximately 20 pounds by 6 weeks of age. Dane puppies will typically grow until they are 2-3 years old, tapering off their surprising weight gain around the 6-7-month marker. This begs the question, what should responsible owners feed such a boisterous and fast-growing breed of dog?

There are many, many diets, meal plans, and opinions on what food is the ideal diet for Great Dane puppies, but the science and facts of Great Dane nutrition can easily be misconstrued as they cycle through word-of-mouth, prompting some breeders, veterinarians, and owners to prescribe diets and meal plans that don't support a healthy metabolic rate. Alternatively, some diets can contain too much calcium, protein, or carbs for the breed to thrive, others neglect meat entirely.

In this paper, we'll dive into the world of Great Dane feeding and nutrition to help you make the best decision for your Great Dane puppy, based on scientific opinion from the industry's foremost experts.

A "Normal" Diet

For most Great Dane puppy owners, kibble, or a 'normal' puppy diet is going to be the #1 choice to feed your new pet. Kibble is a readily available, cost-effective, and solid choice for feeding your Great Dane. Kibbles are marketed and sold by breed specific standards that tailor their ingredients to that of small, medium, or large breeds, and breed specific additives to help dogs live a long, healthy life - including glucosamine, an increased protein level, etc. There are also hypoallergenic brands, and fat-free options.

Kibble diets also feature their fair share of disadvantages. Kibble is often recalled by the manufacturers after the FDA or another governing body finds a bad batch of food. In 2015 alone, the first three months of the year saw nine individual kibble recalls in the US.

In Great Danes, who are susceptible to bloat - also known as stomach torsion - kibble is wolfed down as soon as the puppy is fed their dinner, whereas a raw diet is a more enjoyable meal to give a puppy that is typically consumed slower. Bloat can be a fatal ailment for Great Danes and other large, deep-chested breeds. Some owners will strategize giving their puppy half of their meal interrupted by 30 minutes of downtime before giving the remainder of the meal.

It's recommended that Great Dane puppies receive a kibble that features protein-based meats as the first 5 ingredients listed on the bag, and can be chicken, fish, beef, and lamb.

The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) recommends that Great Dane puppies be given a bare minimum of 22% protein for growth, and 18% protein for good health maintenance as mature adult dogs. The majority of large breed quality dog foods will exceed these wish-list percentages. Fat is another important source of food and energy for Great Danes, an ingredient that provides much needed flavour to typically dry kibbles. Fat percentages for Great Dane puppies should comprise at least 8% of the diet, and 5% for adult dogs. Again, most standard dog foods on the market today have more fat content included in their makeup than these percentages.

A good kibble will also pay special attention to the amount of calcium and phosphorus in the food which is also important for giant breed puppies like Great Danes.

How Much & How Often?

Great Danes should be need to achieve their full size and weight at a slow and steady pace, to avoid potential complications like bowing legs, and painful swollen metacarpals in their paws from growing too fast.

Key to steady and slow growth, it to avoid extremely high protein and high calorie kibble. Owners should invest in a high-quality dog food developed for large breeds, and don't forget to consult with your breeder to see which foods they recommend. Great Dane puppies should always appear light and lean until they are approximately 2 years of age and shouldn't be pushed to be too active until they reach the age of 18 months. Reputable breeders will recommend feeding your Great Dane puppy multiple smaller meals per day, to help reduce the likelihood of bloat. An elevated food dispensing dish is also a great investment for feeding your Great Dane puppy, to help eliminate digestive problems. Cold, clean water should be available to your Great Dane at all times.

Great Dane puppies are full of life and energy, and their diet - whichever you should choose - should exemplify the perfect balance of nutrition, fats, vitamins, and proteins to complement their nature. Raw diets and traditional kibble diets supplemented with high quality proteins are the best bet for making sure that your puppy is receiving all of the necessary nutrients they need to become the Apollo of the Dogs that he/she was born to be.

At the end of the day, responsible owners will strive to give their dog the best food humanly possible, whatever that choice is. When in doubt, never hesitate to contact your Great Dane breeder and your veterinarian to discuss your puppy's nutrition plan.

Your puppy is currently being fed: _____

If you notice stomach upset such as Diarrhea, mix plain canned pumpkin and boiled white rice with your puppy's food to help settle GI upset.