

Ayurvedic Pet Care

By Alakananda Devi

Ayurveda and Your Cat

Just like you, your cat can benefit from an Ayurvedic approach to food and daily routine. The best routine for your cat is that which most closely resembles the natural life of a non-domestic cat.

Food

The single most important thing to for your cat's health is to stop feeding him or her dry cat food. Here's why:

Dry cat food provokes vata because it is dry and rough.

Dry cat food provokes pitta due to content of toxic chemicals such as ethoxyquin (used to harden rubber) and BTA. These lead to aggressive behavior and fighting. Even high-quality dry cat food such as Avoderm contains corn, a pitta-provoking allergen. Feeding of a mono-diet also causes food allergies and other pitta reactions, leading to diarrhea and ulcerative colitis.

Dry cat food provokes kapha because it is high in carbohydrates, an unnatural food for cats. Due to its unnatural dryness, dry cat food disturbs the water carrying channels leading to diabetes, dehydration and thirst. Cats fed on a diet of commercial dry cat food readily develop urinary stones, cystitis, or even glomerulonephritis (kidney disease).

Commercial dry cat foods often contain such items as rendered cats and dogs, cancerous parts of cows, meat from diseased animals (all so-called meat by-products) as well as sweepings from granary floors. Such foods can lead to prion-caused diseases such as mad-cow disease.

Commercial wet cat foods also contain dangerous meat by-products. Use a good quality wet food such as Innova, Wellness or California Natural.

The ideal way to feed your cat is a raw food diet. However, cats will do pretty well as long as they have good quality wet food.

Caring for your cat's digestive fire

As a carnivorous hunter, your cat's digestive system is very different from yours. Although the following rules may sound harsh from a human's perspective, they are essential for your cat's health.

- Leave 12-24 hours between feedings
- Do not expose your cat to the smell of cat food between feeding times.
- All food MUST be room temperature to lukewarm, NEVER refrigerator-cold.
- Feed your cat when he/she is most hungry. For many pitta cats, your bedtime is their dinner time.
- Rotate protein sources.
Cats readily develop food allergies and do not tolerate a mono-diet.
- Don't give your kitty milk! Cats easily develop a severe addictive allergy to cow's milk.
- Your cat needs a calm, safe place to eat, where they have no fear of being chased or stepped on.
- Keep kitty's food bowl and utensils very clean.
- Don't feed old or stale food.
- A raw food diet is ideal for your cat.
- Limit tuna to an occasional treat. Cats easily develop a severe addictive allergy to tuna.

Indoor Cats need access to:

- *Wheat grass*
- *Fresh, clean water*, preferably not chlorinated.
- *Sunlight*, especially in the early morning, to maintain their tejas, or inner radiance. Lack of natural sunlight is said, according to Shri Karunamayi, to cause blindness in cats.
- *Fresh outdoor air*, to maintain their prana, or vital energy.

Sleep

Cats love to snuggle, and so enjoy sleeping with their guardians. As long as your cat has no fleas and you are not allergic to your cat, this may be ideal. Train your cat to sleep at the foot of the bed on his or her own rug. Cats may carry giardia, so it is ideal to keep your cat away from your pillow and face.

Ayurveda and Your Dog

Just like you, your dog can benefit from an Ayurvedic approach to food and daily routine. The best routine for your dog is that which most closely resembles the natural life of a non-domestic dog.

Food

The single most important thing to for your dog's health is to feed him a raw food diet. Here's why:

- Dry dog food provokes vata because it is dry and rough.

- Dry dog food provokes pitta due to content of toxic chemicals such as ethoxyquin (used to harden rubber) and BTA. These lead to aggressive behavior and fighting.
- Dogs are extremely prone to food allergies, if given the same food daily. Commercial dry dog foods often contain such items as rendered cats and dogs, cancerous parts of cows, meat from diseased animals (all so-called meat by-products) as well as sweepings from granary floors. Such foods can lead to prion-caused diseases such as mad-cow disease.
- Commercial wet dog foods also contain dangerous meat by-products. Use a good quality wet food such as Innova, Wellness or California Natural.
- Dogs don't cook. Their natural diet is raw and this is what they can most easily digest and assimilate. If you are unable to prepare a raw diet for your dog, use a good quality wet food. However, your dog will live a longer, healthier and happier life if given a raw food diet.

Caring for your dog's digestive fire

Although the following rules may sound harsh from a human's perspective, they are essential for your dog's health.

- Leave 12-24 hours between feedings. Usually 24 hours is best, with a small treat in the evening, unless your dog's vet suggests more frequent feedings
- Do not expose your dog to food between feeding times.
- All food **MUST** be room temperature to lukewarm, **NEVER** refrigerator-cold.
- Rotate protein sources. Dogs readily develop food allergies and do not tolerate a mono-diet.
- Don't give your dog allergens such as dairy, wheat, corn yeast and soy. It took many millennia of agriculture for humans to develop the ability to digest these foods. Your dog does not have this evolutionary background and will very easily suffer severe allergy reactions to common treats from your plate or the pet shop.
- Your dog needs a calm, safe place to eat, where they have no fear of being attacked.
- Don't feed old or stale food.
- A raw food diet is ideal for your dog.

Exercise and weight

Give your dog plenty of exercise on a daily basis and do not allow your dog to become overweight. Letting your animal gain weight is one of the most common forms of dog abuse.

Emotional needs

As a pack animal your dog has specific emotional needs, not always the same as yours. Your dog needs company. If you must leave your dog alone for long hours, consider getting another dog or a kitten as a companion, or dropping your dog off during the day with a human, canine or feline friend.

Many dog breeds are bred for a specific function e.g. sheep herding. They will feel happier if they get a chance to do their job.

Speak gently to your dog and train them through rewards and positive feedback. Yelling at your dog or speaking harshly will reinforce aggression, both your own and the dog's, damaging your spiritual growth and the dog's behavior.

Sleep

According to the social structure of canines, exclusion from sleeping with the pack is a sign of ostracism. This is a severe emotional stress to your dog. As long as your dog has no fleas and you are not allergic to your dog, it may be best for him or her to sleep in a basket in your bedroom. Dogs often carry giardia, so it is important to keep your animal away from your pillow, face and personal items.

Ayurveda and Your Rabbit, Hamster, or Guinea Pig

These little animals need:

- *Pure spring water.*
They are very sensitive to chlorine.
- *Fresh greens, especially dandelion greens.* They obtain both optimal nutrition and prana or vital energy from fresh greens, ideally still growing, or else freshly picked.
- *Sunlight,* to maintain their tejas, or inner radiance
- *Exercise.*
- *Fresh outdoor air.*
- *Tranquility.* Their lives are dominated by fear—the fight or flight reflex. They need to be in a safe space where they will not experience a constant barrage of fear.
- *Quiet.* They belong in the peace of nature and do not enjoy stimuli such as loud music.

Small animals are very sensitive to chemicals such as lawn pesticides (which can kill rabbits), paints, harsh cleansers. Be kind to yourself, the earth and your little friend by avoiding toxic chemicals.

Alakananda Devi is director of Alandi Ayurvedic Clinic in Boulder, Colorado, and principal teacher of Alandi Gurukula of Ayurveda, a traditional ayurvedic school and apprenticeship program. She can be reached at 303-786-7437 or by email at: info@alandiashram.org