

# Best bones for dogs: Complete vet-approved guide for pet parents by Dr. Peter Dobias, DVM

Clip source: [What Raw Bones Are Best For Dogs? Complete Guide | Dr. Peter Dobias – Dr. Dobias Natural Healing](#)

## WHERE I STAND ON GIVING BONES TO DOGS AS A VET

Not sure what the best bones for dogs are or even if it's safe to feed them to your pup?

Over the past 25 years, I've discovered the immense benefits of feeding raw bones to dogs through personal experience and careful observation in my veterinary practice.

My goal in this comprehensive guide is to share with you solid, practice-proven insights and results that have transformed dental health in dogs through mindful bone feeding. This approach dramatically reduces or even eliminates the need for anesthesia for dog dental hygiene, and the effect can be nothing short of life-transforming.

## WHAT ARE THE RIGHT BONES FOR YOUR DOG?

When selecting the right bones for your dog, considering factors like size, shape, and hardness to ensure safety and well-being is crucial. Your dog will benefit greatly if you make informed choices and follow best practices.

But before we dive into my recommendations, let's touch on why raw bone feeding makes sense and why I do not hesitate to give bones to my dog and recommend them to my canine patients.

## RAW BONE FEEDING IS INSPIRED BY NATURE

When considering the best diet for our beloved dogs, it's always a good idea to look at what nature offers. For example, plenty of evidence shows wild canines, like wolves, foxes, and wild dogs, naturally munch on bones as part of their diet.

This evidence comes from observing these animals in their natural habitats, studying the stomach contents of deceased wild canines, and analyzing their feces (scat). Out in the wild, bones provide essential nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus, which are vital for maintaining strong bones and teeth. Plus, chewing on bones helps keep their teeth clean and free from periodontal disease and gingivitis.

Canine teeth are built perfectly for a dog's specific dietary needs. Unlike the teeth of humans and herbivores, your dog's canine teeth have sharp, pointy premolars that are great for shearing meat and crunching bones.

In other words, our canine companions are well-equipped to handle bones as part of their diet.

All of this shows that bones play a vital role in the natural diet of wild canines contributing to their overall health and happiness. By learning from nature, we can make better choices when feeding our canine friends.

**Note:** *There is virtually no functional difference between the digestive tract of wild and domesticated canines. If presented to a histologist or anatomy expert, they would not be able to recognize one from the other. The only difference is in size, which should be considered when offering your dog the right type of bone.*

## WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF BONES?

### 1. Bone feeding keeps your dog's teeth healthy and improves overall health and longevity.

Safe raw bone feeding has a dramatically positive effect on dental health and is directly tied to protecting the internal organs and building a solid foundation of longevity. In this article, we'll discuss the advantages of raw bones, address common concerns, and guide you to safe bone-feeding practices.

Dental disease is a concern for many dog lovers not only because of bad breath, but it's also considered a leading cause of premature death in dogs. The conventional approach to canine dentistry is also costly, time-consuming, and unpleasant for dogs.

### 2. Raw bones will keep your dog entertained and fit.

Aside from the health benefits, raw bones also offer exercise and entertainment for your dog.

For example, when given the right type and size of bone, your dog will have a great time chewing and gnawing which not only strengthens their jaw muscles and cleans their teeth, but also provides mental stimulation and entertainment.

Thus, feeding raw bones can help prevent boredom and behavioural issues in puppies and adult dogs, leading to a happier and more content pooch.

### 3. Feeding your dog raw bones helps prevent stomach bloating.

Dogs that regularly consume bones tend to have more muscular stomach walls and a lower risk of experiencing bloat. However, it's crucial to remember that engaging your dog in vigorous exercise, jumping, or leaping after any meal, especially when it includes bones, should be avoided.

The reason is that exercising a dog after feeding can increase the danger of a stomach twist and bloat, also known as gastric dilation-volvulus.

**IMPORTANT! Allow your dog to rest and digest for four but preferably six hours after eating bones.**

### WHY DO MANY VETERINARIANS STILL OBJECT TO BONE FEEDING?

I understand that veterinarians who oppose feeding bones to dogs may have the best intentions at heart. However, these concerns often arise due to a need for more education in natural canine nutrition that the conventional pet food industry still needs to support.

In the following section, I will address some of the most common concerns raised by my fellow veterinarians and provide my counterarguments:

**Concern no. 1:** *Dogs may break their teeth on hard bones, leading to painful dental issues and potential veterinary treatments.*

**Answer:** Dental fractures can be eliminated when you feed bones recommended for your dog's size. Large and strong dogs should not be given marrow bones or thick-walled bones.

**Concern no. 2:** *Bones can cause blockages in a dog's gastrointestinal tract, potentially leading to complications and even surgery.*

**Answer:** In my 25 years of experience, I haven't seen a gastrointestinal obstruction in a dog eating raw bones. Although obstructions may occur, they are likely to have other underlying causes.

**Concern no. 3:** *Sharp bone fragments can puncture a dog's stomach or intestines, causing life-threatening internal injuries and infections.*

**Answer:** Although people often worry about bone splintering, canines have evolved to eat bones. A dog's stomach acid has a pH between 1 - 2, which dissolves bones before they reach the intestinal tract. Therefore, splintered bones don't pose any more threat than eating other foods.

**Concern no. 4:** *Raw bones can carry harmful bacteria like Salmonella or E. coli, posing a risk to dogs and their human companions.*

**Answer:** The concern about bacteria is unfounded because dogs have evolved to deal with such pathogens. With proper preparation of raw bones and meat, I haven't seen any salmonella infections in dogs or their owners. Minor exposure to pathogens may even help train a dog's immune system.

**Concern no. 5:** *Feeding bones can cause gastrointestinal issues in some dogs, such as constipation from excessive bone consumption or diarrhea from the high-fat content of marrow bones.*

**Answer:** Constipation from eating bones would be rare in dogs with proper digestion. It's essential to distinguish between hard stool from digested bone and constipation. Hard stool helps express and maintain the proper anal gland function

**Concern no. 6:** *Some veterinarians are concerned that feeding bones might lead to an imbalanced diet*

**Answer:** Based on more than 30 years in veterinary practice and 25 years of feeding raw meat, bone, and a plant-based diet and witnessing the results in thousands of my patients and my dogs, I'm confident that such a diet is superior to feeding processed kibble and canned food that sits on the shelves for months before feeding.

**No physician would recommend processed food to their human patients, and it neither makes sense for our dogs.**

### WHAT BONES TO GIVE YOUR DOG AND WHY

In the following segment, I'm presenting you with a helpful chart I created to make bone feeding easier and safer for all dog parents.

This chart divides dogs into three size categories: small, medium, and large, with corresponding recommendations for suitable bones and their purpose for each group.

The chart also highlights four primary objectives of feeding bones to dogs:

- 1. Play and entertainment:** Bones can provide an enjoyable and engaging activity for dogs, keeping them occupied and entertained.
- 2. Exercise:**Chewing on bones exercises the jaw muscles and involves using their paws to hold the bones, providing a physical workout.
- 3. Nutrition:**Bones are rich in essential nutrients and contribute to a dog's health and well-being.
- 4. Dental hygiene:**Selecting the appropriate bone size for a particular dog ensures proper dental hygiene, as crunching on bones helps clean teeth and prevents dental issues.

The following chart lets you quickly identify the most suitable bones for your dog based on their size and intended purpose. Approximating the size and texture should be relatively easy if a particular kind of bone is not listed.



# Raw Bones For Safe Feeding, Healthy Teeth and Play



Small dogs 

**F** **D** **P**

Medium dogs 

**F** **D** **P**

Large dogs 

**F** **D** **P**

<b>F= Food</b>	Chicken neck 	✓		✓	✓			✓	
<b>D= Dental</b>	Duck neck 	✓		✓	✓			✓	
<b>P= Play</b>	Chicken back 	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
	Chicken or duck wings 	✓			✓			✓	
	Chicken or duck legs & feet <i>(with nails cut off)</i> 	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
	Lamb or goat shank 		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Beef ribs 		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Medium knuckle bones 			✓			✓		✓
	Marrow bone 			✓	⚠ Do not feed, fractures teeth			⚠ Do not feed, fractures teeth	
	Quail bones 	✓			✓			✓	
	Rabbit carcass 	✓			✓			✓	



**We recommend that 25% of your dog's food requirement be in the form of edible bones.**

*On days you feed edible bones, include them in your dog's daily food amount.*

### Reminders

*If your dog doesn't digest bones well, or has many missing teeth, supplementing with GreenMin is sufficient to meet their calcium & other mineral requirements.*

*Always supervise your dog while they eat raw bones and feed bones 2-3 times a week*

*Do not give marrow bones to large dogs who are strong chewers, as dental fractures are common.*

*Ideally choose bones from local sources that are organic or antibiotic/hormone free and pasture raised animals if possible.*

**Never feed cooked bones** or heat processed bone meal as drying and heat processing makes it indigestible and could lead to emergencies.

For more info, visit the [recipemaker.peterdobias.com](http://recipemaker.peterdobias.com)

peterdobias.com

Picking the perfect bones for your pup ensures they are safe and happy.

## HOW STRONG IS YOUR DOG'S BITE?

The bite strength of a dog can vary greatly depending on factors such as breed, size, and individual characteristics.

Measured in pounds per square inch (PSI), large dogs like Rottweilers, German Shepherds, or Mastiffs typically have a bite force ranging from 200 to 700 PSI, while smaller breeds like Shih Tzus, Chihuahuas, or Pugs may only have a bite force between 50 and 150 PSI.

Large dogs should not be given strong marrow bones because they can easily fracture their teeth on a too-thick bone. On the other hand, a dental fracture is much less likely to happen in small dogs.

## HOW TO AVOID DENTAL FRACTURES WHEN FEEDING YOUR DOG BONES

Avoid beef bones, buffalo bones, or bison shank bones, especially for medium and large dogs, as they can be too hard for your dog's teeth. In addition, when big dogs chew on these rigid bones, they might end up cracking their teeth – turning an inexpensive marrow bone into a painful and pricey ordeal.

Little dogs may not have a problem with large marrow bones since they can't crunch through them. But, these bones don't do much for cleaning their teeth.

Sure, your dog may love getting to the bone marrow but remember that dogs in the wild would mainly hunt smaller prey like birds, rodents, rabbits, goats, and sometimes deer. They wouldn't eat big animals like buffaloes or cows all that often.

## HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU GIVE BONES TO YOUR DOG?

To keep your dog's teeth in tip-top shape and save money on dental bills, try feeding the right dental bones (see the chart above) twice to three times a week.

I don't recommend feeding bones daily as it may strain the digestive tract. Moderation is key when it comes to adding raw bones to your dog's diet.

## WHAT IS THE IDEAL DENTAL BONE FOR DOGS?

The ideal bone should be hard and crunchy but not too thick, giving your dog's teeth a good 'scale' without the risk of dental fractures. In addition, by choosing the right-sized bones for your dog, you can keep them entertained and healthy at the same time.

Don't forget to check out our [complete guide to natural dental care for dogs](#) and learn how you can avoid most anesthesia when taking your pup to the vet for a dental cleaning.

## WHAT IF YOUR DOG WON'T EAT BONES?

If your dog isn't a fan of bones or doesn't digest them well, give them a balanced diet with these four [essential nutrients](#) – minerals, vitamins, probiotics, and omega oils.

The only challenge is dental care. Without bones, you'll need to pay extra attention to your dog's teeth to keep them clean and healthy.

## ARE CHICKEN BONES SAFE FOR DOGS?

In my experience, raw chicken bones are fine for dogs. Their powerful stomach acids with pH between 1-2 will break the bones into smaller, more manageable pieces before they hit the intestines. As soon as the bones are digested, the pH becomes less acidic to protect the stomach lining.

**Note:** *Chicken and turkey bones are generally heating and may cause digestive upset in dogs that tend to be hot.*

## ARE BONE SPLINTERS DANGEROUS AND WILL THEY PUNCTURE YOUR DOG'S INTESTINE?

Dogs have evolved to have super strong stomachs and intestinal walls that will contract and bounce off the partially digested bones.

If your dog swallows a piece it can't digest easily, my experience is that they will throw it back up. In 25 years, I haven't had any intestinal perforations in dogs, and I confidently feed my dog crunchy bones.

## ARE BONES GOOD FOR ALL DOGS?

A small percentage of dogs may not do well eating raw bones. If your dog struggles with eating raw bones, try introducing them slowly through small portions and gradually increase the amount.

Keep a close eye on your pup's response to bone feeding, and if they still don't do well with bones, stop offering them altogether.

Remember, every dog is unique, and what works for one might not be suitable for another.

## CAN YOU LEAVE YOUR DOG ALONE WHILE CHEWING A BONE?

The answer is simple — always be nearby and supervise your dog when they're eating bones to ensure their safety. In rare instances, a bone can get lodged between your dog's teeth and you may need to be there to assist.

## CAN YOUR DOG CHOKER ON BONES?

If you have a dog that likes to gobble food down, give them chunks of bone larger than they can swallow, so they need to chew those pieces off.

# CAUTION: WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER FEED COOKED BONES TO YOUR DOG

Feeding cooked bones to dogs can be dangerous due to their indigestibility, leading to gastrointestinal obstructions. The myth of not being able to feed bones to dogs stems from the confusion between raw and cooked bones.

When bones are cooked, collagen fibres break down and minerals become more concentrated. This makes bones hard and indigestible.

**NEVER EVER FEED YOUR DOG COOKED BONES!**

**First Aid Note:** *If your dog accidentally eats cooked bones, I suggest you follow my [foreign body ingestion protocol](#), which has saved many dogs from emergency surgery.*

## CAN CHEW TOYS REPLACE RAW BONES?

Logically, while convenient, chew toys can't replace the nutritional benefits of natural bones for dogs. Furthermore, some toys and synthetic dog bones contain hormone-disrupting chemicals like BPA and phthalates, leading to health and reproductive issues in dogs.

They also have a significant environmental impact, as materials like PVC and microplastics are non-biodegradable and contribute to plastic pollution.

If you want to buy your dog a chew toy, get one made of natural materials or child-safe non-BPA plastic. I don't buy synthetic furry toys for my dog Pax.

## CAN DENTAL TREATS REPLACE BONES?

While dental treats can benefit your dog's oral hygiene, they generally aren't sufficient to replace the scaling and cleaning effects of natural bones.

Chewing on raw bones helps remove plaque and tartar buildup more effectively than most dental chews and treats, as bones have a naturally abrasive texture that cleans teeth down to the gumline.

Additionally, many dental treats contain unhealthy or harmful ingredients, so checking the label before giving them to your dog is crucial.