

## Diet Transition



Many owners don't realize the importance of diet transition in pets; however, a slow transition can minimize the risk of diarrhea or vomiting. While some pets can be rapidly transitioned to a new food (and in some instances such as a pet food recall this must occur), in most cases a diet transition is recommended. A transition from the current food to a new food allows for adaption of the gastrointestinal tract including adaption of the intestinal microbiota. For most pets, a 7-day transition is adequate but those with a history of gastrointestinal disease may benefit from a longer transition period.

One transition strategy begins with the owner offering 25% of the old diet and replace it with 25% of the new diet. Feed this combination for 2 days. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> day, the owner offers 50% of the old diet and 50% of the new food (i.e. half of the old food, and half of the new food). On the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> day, the owner offers 25% old diet, and 75% new diet. Finally, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, feed 100% of the new diet. The 2 diets may be mixed in the same bowl or offered side by side.

Meal feeding pets rather than ad libitum feeding is recommended since this allows the owner to better document food intake and the pet is more like feel hungry before the next meal when food is not contently present. Higher success may occur when the owner leaves the house for a period of time and is not tempted to feed each time the pet begs for a snack.

For cats that are texture sensitive (some like specific shapes of dry food or a specific texture of canned food), try to find a version that is similar to the old variety. This will yield greater success with the transition. Some cats can be challenging to transition, and can take weeks to months. . The owner and veterinary care time should monitor the cats body weight during the transition period, and make adjustments to the nutrition plan if the cat is not maintaining appropriate body weight and body condition.

Pets that are experiencing medical issues and must transition to a new food to treat the medical condition can be a bit trickier. When pets do not feel well, they will often experience 'adversity' to a food that they associate with being sick. Transitioning to the new diet may cause long term adversity. It is generally recommended, when medically appropriate, to transition to the new diet once the pet is feeling better, and a more prolonged transition period may be necessary. At any time during the transition, if the pet develops clinical signs of illness such as diarrhea, or food intake decreases, the veterinary health care team should be notified.