

### In Memory, March - May 2003

These beloved greyhounds have recently passed over. We'd like to honor them by publishing their names in our newsletter. Please let us know if there is a hound who should be remembered. We hope the list is always short.

We encourage friends and relatives to consider a donation to GPA or the Blue Fund in their hound's memory. Memorials are greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged in our newsletter.

Sophie Donatello

Vinnie Dretzka

Romp Kerl

Bugsey May

#### Couch Potato Press

is a quarterly publication of Greyhound Pets of America-Wisconsin, a non-profit organization dedicated to placing ex-racing greyhounds in loving homes as pets. It is designed and edited by Ellen Paulus, and includes many contributors and volunteers. Please direct any correspondence, address changes or donations to:

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# COUCH POTATO PRESS



A Publication of  
Greyhound Pets of  
America-Wisconsin  
www.gpawisconsin.org

June 2003

### Special Needs Hounds

Perhaps you've wondered how many times GPA-WI takes in "special needs" dogs. The answer is: as often as we can manage! There are *always* dogs with special circumstances that need our help, and sometimes it seems the calls come in daily. GPA-WI's volunteers are often bombarded with many types of special needs all at once, but we always do our best to accommodate each dog's situation.

Special needs hounds may have had an injury at the track such as a broken leg, or torn muscle. Or perhaps they are being returned by their owner because of a medical or behavioral issue that the owner is not willing or able to deal with. A dog could even be classified as "special needs" because of age. Finding a permanent home can sometimes be more difficult for a "senior" than for a younger dog.



BRENDA, one of GPA-WI's special needs hounds, gets a visit from a fowl neighbor.

Fortunately, many of you have big hearts and are willing to overlook these special needs in order to

### 2nd Annual Gala Logo Contest

GPA-Wisconsin is again soliciting designs for the 2003 Gala logo. Designs must include the following elements:

- 1) GPA-Wisconsin or Greyhound Pets of America-Wisconsin
- 2) 9th Annual Gala Greyhound Gathering
- 3) www.gpawisconsin.org

Other elements are left up to the artist. Design must be suitable for t-shirts, tote bags and other Gala merchandise. Please submit your entry no later than September 1st, 2003 to Katie Traxel at: kct@execpc.com or 4302 85th St., Kenosha, WI 53142. Winner will receive a free t-shirt, mention in the newsletter and GPA-WI's undying gratitude.

provide these wonderful dogs with a loving home. Some of our most recent special needs hounds are listed below. We thought you might be interested to know their status.

**Highland** - *senior* - our featured hound from the last newsletter was adopted shortly after he starred on our front page!

**Luke** - *broken front leg* - Adopted!

**Izzy** - *broken hock* - Adopted!

**Mona** - *broken femur* - was hit by a car, and was then surrendered, recovered in foster care - Adopted!

**Tom** - *broken hock* - recovering in a foster home - Available

**Lucky** - *senior* - surrendered to the Humane Society - in foster care - Available

**Brenda** - *compound fracture of the hock* - waiting for her medical condition to improve, then will be scheduled for surgery - in foster care - Available, but not ready to be adopted. (See her photo at left.)

A special thank you to all the volunteers and adoptive families who have helped these dogs along the road to recovery - whether that was by making a monetary donation to the Blue Fund, shuttling them to and from vet appointments, changing their bandages, administering physical therapy, or showing them love and compassion by providing them with a home, you are the folks that make a difference in the lives of these dogs. **THANK YOU!**

#### Dog Accessories

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Website  
www.snobhounds.com

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 www.dogsondtheirpeople.com • www.dogcoats.com

# SN\*B HOUNDS



**Happy Birthday, Phantom!**  
You bring us so much joy.  
We love you!  
Mom and Dad

#### Would you like to see your ad in the Couch Potato Press?

GPA-WI is selling ad space (approx. business card size) for \$25.00 per issue. We publish 4 issues per calendar year, with a maximum of 4 ads per issue. Ad acceptance and placement is based on a first-come, first-served criteria. Fees from these ads will help defray the cost of mailing this newsletter to our readership. We maintain the right to modify artwork for size or content. For more information contact: Ellen Paulus at (262) 284-4934 or email: pauprint@execpc.com

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**Mark Your Calendar:**  
**OCTOBER 18TH, 2003**  
**9TH ANNUAL GALA**  
**GREYHOUND GATHERING**  
 at the Waukesha County Expo Center.

**What's Inside:**

- Top New Dry Dog Foods (A reprinted article from Whole Dog Journal)
- Adoptions & Memorials

*Editor's Note:* Adopters often ask for information about which type of food we recommend for their new greyhound. The following article from *Whole Dog Journal* is a comprehensive look at the various brands of dry food & how to select a food that's best for your dog.

### New Top Dry Dog Foods

by Nancy Kerns

#### Hurray! An industry-wide trend toward better ingredients has begun.

A few months ago, the owner of a small, premium pet food company remarked to me, "If the giant food companies ever started using top-quality ingredients — the kinds of things that are in your 'Top Dry Foods' selections — all of us 'little guys' are going to be out of business."

Actually, it *has* begun; the big dogs of the pet food industry *are* starting to develop products that contain the sorts of ingredients that *Whole Dog Journal* has celebrated for the past five years — things like fresh, whole meats, vegetables, fruits, and grains; organically raised

meat and poultry; healthful herbs; and natural colloidal trace minerals.

Fortunately for all the small makers of premium foods, the ones who have been committed to achieving truly excellent products for years, the giant food conglomerates have not really put all the pieces together — yet.

Take Hill's Pet Nutrition's latest launch, for example. Hill's has identified a fast growing niche within the \$12.4 billion pet food market in the US: discriminating pet owners who want "natural" foods for their beloved animal companions. Hill's cites some statistics on its Web site that explain its interest in the "natural" niche: The number of "natural" products increased by 38 percent in 2001; the largest natural food supermarket chain is growing at a 20 percent clip; sales of natural and organic foods are growing at an 18 percent annual rate and are projected to surpass \$17 billion this year.

Given these facts, Hill's came up with this: Science Diet Nature's Best™, a line of "all-natural" dog (and cat) foods with "high quality, naturally preserved ingredients." Nature's Best does contain whole beef, peas, and carrots. That's a huge step in the right direction for a conglomerate food maker — even if these ingredients are way down in the 7th, 9th, and 10th places, respectively, on the list of ingredients.

#### Small companies still the best

As I hinted above, WDJ's "Top Dry Food" makers needn't be too worried about the efforts like Hill's — yet. Nature's Best is a better product than Purina's effort (the execrable "Beneful") to appeal to the "granola and tofu" segment of the pet-owning population, but it's



Don't obsess about which food is the very best. It's better for your dog to rotate between three or four very good foods.

Editor's note: If your dog has a sensitive stomach, remember to switch foods gradually!

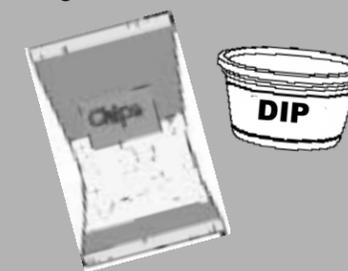
not "top-quality" (see comparison chart - page six).

Nevertheless, the wheels are turning. The pet food industry leaders have finally realized there are millions of people who are willing to pay *a lot* for foods that can help keep their animal companions as healthy as possible for as long as possible. The savvy marketers among them have already taken aim on us free-spending health nuts; witness the plethora of new products with the words "holistic" and "natural" in their names, or at least in giant letters on the front of the bags.

Small pet food companies that are committed to producing top-quality foods have one big advantage over the corporate giants: Their production runs are small enough that they can formulate foods using ingredients of amazing quality, and the consumers most committed to their dogs' health will pay whatever these foods cost. For the present, these are the companies who are making the healthiest foods. (The small companies may not make the most consistent products, however; see "Made in a

## Couch Potatoes With New Homes: March 2003 - May 2003

- Annabelle Aberle
- Lady Abraham
- Star Ametani
- Sapphire Bartolotta
- Twilight Donatello
- Izzy Erdman
- Cabo Kaletka
- Bayo Kasten
- Calley Kerl
- Ellie Kilmer
- Bailey Lebbing
- Kanyon Lisberg
- Murray O'Reilly
- Max Price
- Skip Schoone
- Highland Stahmer
- Luke Strandt
- Jumper Taylor-Wade
- Lonnie Wiggins



### Pass the Dip!

(These families have chipped!)

- Benny Ahlquist/Jakoubek
- Flyer Brereton
- Tuc Gongola
- Hatter Grossman
- Mickey Heise
- Mona Kerl
- BooBoo Lien
- Keno May
- Jesse McFarland
- Allie O'Reilly
- Cody Price
- Freddie Seeberg



Don't forget to check our Web site at [www.gpawisconsin.org](http://www.gpawisconsin.org) for "pupdates" on available dogs, GPA events and other greyhound-related sites.

### 9 LIFE LESSONS LEARNED FROM A DOG

1. If you stare at someone long enough, eventually you'll get what you want.
2. Don't go out without I.D.
3. Be direct with people; let them know how you feel by piddling on their shoes.
4. Be aware of when to hold your tongue, and when to use it.
5. Leave room in your schedule for a good nap.
6. Always give people a friendly greeting.
7. A cold nose in the right place is most effective.
8. When you do something wrong, always take responsibility (as soon as you're dragged shamefully out from under the bed).
9. If it's not wet and sloppy, it's not a real kiss.

## The Gala is Coming!!

For those of you who are new to the group, the **9th Annual Gala Greyhound Gathering will be held on October 18th, 2003 at the Waukesha County Expo Center.** This year, for the first time, the gala will be held in the arena. This event is our only major fundraiser and provides an opportunity for folks to come enjoy a day of shopping, bidding and visiting with other greyhound families - and the best part is that you can bring your hound(s)!

The event begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. There are vendors of all sorts selling doggie stuff, human stuff, treats and eats - plus an adoption booth, a raffle, and silent and live auctions with some really cool prizes!

Mark your calendar and start saving that extra cash because this is one event you and your hound won't want to miss! Admission is free and all proceeds go directly to the dogs.

More information will be coming in our September "Gala Edition" of the newsletter, including a schedule of the days activities, a list of vendors, and what types of prizes will be raffled and auctioned off.

If you would like to donate an item for the raffle or auction, or you know someone who would, please contact Ellen Schneiderman at 414-351-2052.



Mona, a recent special needs hound, recovering in foster care just a few days after surgery. Mona is happily back on all fours, and is enjoying the comforts of her new adoptive home.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- Don't let pictures & adjectives on dog food bags influence your selection! Look at the ingredient list first.
- Compare the ingredients to our selection criteria (page 5).
- If you can't find any top-quality foods at pet supply stores near you, call some manufacturers and suggest they market their products at an independent pet retail outlet near you.
- Be prepared to pay more for top-quality foods; they will keep your dog healthier in the long run.

<b>Whole Dog Journal's New Top Dry Foods</b>							
<b>Maker, Contact Info</b>	<b>Variety</b>	<b>Min. % Protein</b>	<b>Min. % Fat</b>	<b>Max. % Fiber</b>	<b>Max % Moisture</b>	<b>First 10 Ingredients</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>ARTEMIS</b> Artemis Pet Foods Canoga Park, CA (800) 282-5876 artemispetfood.com	"Natural 6 Mix"	23	14	2.9	10	Chicken meal, turkey meal, brown rice, brewer's rice, lamb meal, oatmeal, chicken fat (nat. preserves), dried beet pulp, dried eggs, fish meal...	Contains digestive enzymes and probiotics. Label includes "best used by" date and states amount of Omega-3 and Omega-6. Meets AAFCO "Nutritional Profiles" standard. Company sent notarized statement to certify that food is made with 44.80 total meat protein. Awesome.
<b>BENCH &amp; FIELD</b> Bench & Field Pet Foods, LLC Mishawaka, IN (800) 525-4802 benchandfield.com	"Holistic Natural Canine Formula"	24	15	4.9	10	Chicken meal, ground brown rice, whole ground barley, fish meal, chicken, chicken fat (nat. preserves), dried beet pulp, amaranth, oatmeal tomato pomace...	Label claims certified organically grown chicken is used in food. Label also states amounts of Omega-3, Omega-6, & glucosamine hydrochloride. Meets AAFCO "Nutritional Profiles" standard. Bench & Field makes other foods, none near the quality of this food. Sold in stores and online.
<b>BURNS</b> Burns Pet Nutrition Chesterston, IN (877) 983-9651 bprn4u.com	"Brown Rice & Ocean Fish"	18.5	7.5	2.2	9	Brown rice, ocean fish meal, peas, oats, chicken fat, sunflower oil, seaweed, (vitamins and minerals)	Products were developed by John Burns, MRCVS, a Scottish veterinarian. Sold through independent outlets and directly from web site. Product literature states that no genetically modified ingredients are used.
<b>DRS. FOSTER &amp; SMITH</b> Drs. Foster & Smith Rhineland, WI (800) 826-7206 drsfostersmith.com	"Adult Maintenance Formula, Chicken & Brown Rice"	24	14	3.5	10	Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, whole barley, rice, rice bran, chicken fat, natural flavor, whole ground flaxseed, egg product...	Things are getting interesting in the world of dog food. Drs. Foster & Smith is a LARGE catalog company that sells all sorts of dog care items. Selling their own signature label food is a new venture. Product literature brags about their food's lack of artificial preservatives, colors, and flavors - very WDJ, if we do say so ourselves.
<b>GO! NATURAL</b> For Paws Services, Inc. Abbotsford, BC (866) 864-6112 forpaws.ca	"Super Premium Chicken, Fruit & Vegetable Diet"	24	14	3.5	10	Chicken meal, chicken meat, whole brown rice, whole white rice, hull-less barley, sunflower oil, chicken fat (nat. preserves), salmon meal, dried whole potatoes, rice bran...	We were surprised to see this relatively new product being well displayed & supported at a "big box" pet food chain store in our area. Meets AAFCO "Nutritional Profiles" standard. Label also states levels of Omega-3, Omega-6 glucosamine, chondroitin, and KCal/cup (617).
<b>ROYAL CANIN</b> Royal Canin USA St. Peters, MO (800) 592-2673 royalcanin.com	"Natural Blend Adult Formula"	26	15	3.0	10	Chicken meal, brown rice, chicken, oatmeal, brewer's rice, chicken fat (nat. preserves), dried tomato pomace, natural flavors, flaxseed, fish meal...	Also includes probiotics and prebiotics. Label states Omega-3 and Omega-6 levels. Meets AAFCO "Nutritional Profiles" standard. According to label, this product meets ISO 9001 certification. On bag we bought, "Best used by" date was missing.
<b>PRAIRIE</b> Nature's Variety Lincoln, NE (888) 519-7387 naturesvariety.com	"Lamb & Rice Medley"	24	14	3.0	10	Lamb, barley, brown rice, oatmeal, canola oil (nat. preserves), flaxseed Menhaden fish, suncured alfalfa meal, montmorillonite (organic trace mineral compound), flaxseed oil...	Very interesting company; definitely targeted at health-conscious consumers. Product literature states that dry food flavors should be rotated, and that dry foods should be rotated with their other products: canned, raw frozen, and freeze-dried. Company also sells raw frozen bones, special dried meaty bones, and treats. Many products include some organic meats, fruits, vegetables, sprouts, and eggs. Meets AAFCO "Nutritional Profiles" standard.
<b>VERUS</b> VeRus Pet Foods Abingdon, MD (888) 828-3787 veruspetsfoods.com	"GP Advantage Diet: Chicken Meal, Oats & Brown Rice"	26	16	4.0	12	Chicken meal, ground oat groats, ground brown rice, chicken fat (nat. preserves), lamb meal, rice bran, flaxseed, chicory pulp, alfalfa meal, dried kelp...	Company sent WDJ certificates to prove its ingredients are the top-quality ingredients they say they are. We'll be asking the makers of all our other "Top Foods" contenders if they will do the same; should be interesting. VeRus also makes a fish and potato-based food. Meets AAFCO "Nutritional Profiles" standard.

**THE FOLLOWING ARE "NOT RECOMMENDED" ... AND HERE'S WHY**

<b>NATURE'S BEST</b> Hill's Science Diet	Adult Dog, With Real Beef	21.5	12.5	3.5	10	Brewer's rice, ground wheat, turkey meal, corn gluten meal, soybean meal, animal fat (nat. preserves), beef, vegetable oil, peas, carrots...	A protein source appears only third on the list of ingredients and it's not the meat pictured or named on the front of the bag. Beef appears well down the list. We don't like the use of "animal fat" - a low-cost product of dubious, mixed origin. For what it's worth,, we would consider this Science Diet's best offering to date, given the two whole vegetables included it's natural preservatives (the company usually favor artificial), and lack of artificial colors. And this product is WAY better than the next food (below) ...
<b>BENEFUL</b> Nestle Purina Petcare	(only one variety)	25	10	4.0	14	Ground yellow corn, chicken-by-product meal, corn gluten meal, whole wheat flour, beef tallow (nat. preserves), rice flour, beef, soy flour, sugar, sorbitol...	Nothing redeems this food in our opinion, with its dried peas and carrots (20th & 21st on the list of ingredients), two types of sweeteners (9th & 10th on the list), and artificial colors.

Secret Location," WDJ January 2003).

But (as the pet food company owner I quoted earlier suggested), if some of the bigger companies applied their ingredient purchasing power, self-owned and -operated manufacturing plants, and giant advertising budgets to work on products that contained even just *good*-quality ingredients, they could pose a real danger to the roughly 13 percent of the pet food market collectively served by all the little companies. Currently, that's what's left of the US pet food market-share pie after Nestlé Purina takes its 30 percent, Iams takes its 14 percent; Hill's MasterFoods USA, and Ol' Roy take 10 percent each; and Nutro takes its 5 percent.

**It's worth it**

Because virtually *all* the foods that are on our "top Dry Foods" lists, past and present, are represented among that tiny 13 percent market share, you can expect them to be

more difficult to find. Recently I was amused by an honest counterperson — obviously a new hire — at a really great independent pet supply store, where I was asking about an obscure new food. She said, "Is that a dog food you've seen on TV? Because if you've seen it on TV, we don't have it. I've never heard of any of the foods we have here," she finished ruefully. Let me just say, "That's our kind of pet store!"

By and large, the giant chain pet supply stores carry *few* foods we consider to be really good. (I got in trouble last year when I said none of the giant chain stores carry *any* of our selections. A *few* carry a few.) In general, you have to look for independent pet supply stores owned by really knowledgeable dog people. Many of the makers of the foods we highlight will sell directly to pet owners, sometimes splitting shipping costs. In other cases, I've heard of people approaching their local groomer, breeder, or even health food store, and asking the store owner to carry

one or two of the foods they like best. If the buyer can tell the store owner that he or she will buy a certain amount of the food monthly, and convince X number of their friends to buy that food, too, the store owner may be able to expand his inventory to include that food.

Expect to pay more for top-quality foods — maybe *two or three times more* than you may have paid for lesser-quality products. Top-quality foods are necessarily expensive because top-quality ingredients cost more than food fragments cast off from the human food industry.

**What we did and didn't do**

We did something new this year. Instead of essentially re-reviewing many of our past selections, we concentrated on finding products that we've never listed before. *All* of our past picks (listed below left) still meet our selection criteria (which is listed directly below). As you'll see, we've "deselected" only one of our past picks: Best In Show, whose

**Whole Dog Journal's Approved "Top Dry Foods" 1998 - 2002**

<b>Azmira Classic</b> .....	Azmira Holistic Animal Care, Tucson, AZ .....	(800) 497-5665
<b>Back to Basics</b> .....	Beowulf Natural Foods, Syracuse, NY .....	(800) 219-2558
<b>Best in Show</b> .....	Out of Business .....	NA
<b>California Natural, Innova</b> .....	Natura Pet Products, Santa Clara, CA .....	(800) 532-7261
<b>Canidae</b> .....	Canidae Corp., San Luis Obispo, CA .....	(800) 398-1600
<b>Eagle Pack Holistic Select</b> .....	Eagle Pet Products, Inc., Mishawaka, IN .....	(800) 255-5959
<b>Flint River Ranch, Dry Water, LC</b> .....	Flint River Ranch, Riverside, CA .....	(909) 682-5048
<b>Hund-N-Flocken, Mmilenium</b> .....	Solid Gold Health Products for Pets, El Cajon, CA .....	(800) 364-4863
<b>Limited Diets Duck &amp; Potato</b> .....	Innovative Veterinary Diets, Pittsburgh, PA .....	(800) 359-4483
<b>Natural Balance Ultra Premium</b> .....	Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance, Pacoima, CA .....	(800) 829-4493
<b>Lifespan</b> .....	Petguard, Orange Park, FL.....	(800) 874-3221
<b>Pinnacle</b> .....	Breeder's Choice Pet Foods, Irwindale, CA .....	(800) 255-4286
<b>Prime Life</b> .....	Owen & Mandeville Pet Products, Oxford, CT .....	(888) 881-7703
<b>PHD Canine Growth &amp; Maintenance</b> .....	Perfect Health Diet Products, Inc., White Plains, NY .....	(800) 743-1502
<b>Showbound Naturals</b> .....	Integrated Pet Products, Exton, PA .....	(800) 542-4677
<b>Timberwolf Organics</b> .....	Yukon Nutritional Co., Lake Wales, FL.....	(863) 439-0049
<b>Wellness Super5 Mix Lamb</b> .....	Old Mother Hubbard, Lowell, MA .....	(800) 225-0904
<b>Wysong Maintenance</b> .....	Wysong Corporation, Midland, MI .....	(800) 748-0233

## Whole Dog Journal's Selection Criteria: What the List of Ingredients Indicates

The hallmark of a high-quality food include the following:

- ✓ **Superior sources of protein.** This means either whole, fresh meats or single-source meat meal (for example, chicken meal rather than poultry meal).
- ✓ **A whole-meat source as one of the first two ingredients** (chicken or chicken meal, for instance). Better yet would be two meat sources among the top three ingredients (say, chicken and chicken meal). Whole, fresh meat is a wonderful, healthy food for dogs, but it also contains a lot of water, and the extra weight of that moisture usually boosts the fresh meat to the top of the list of ingredients (which, by law, are listed in order of their weight contribution to the food). If a list of ingredients begins with whole chicken, followed by three or more grains and no other meat proteins, it's likely the food contains way more grain than meat. There is no way to know for sure, however, since the makers are not required to specify amounts or percentages of each ingredient.

By the way, dry foods can't contain more than about 50 percent meat or other animal products; any more than that, and the machinery that mixes and extrudes the kibble gets gummed up.

Meat is the most natural source of protein for canines, and contains the amino acids most important in canine health. A mix of meat proteins (such as fish and beef) helps round out the amino acid profile of the proteins included in the food.

- ✓ **Whole, unprocessed grains, vegetables, and other foods.** A previously unprocessed food has the best chance of surviving the food-making process with some of its nutrients intact.

High quality dry foods should contain a minimum of the following:

- ▼ **Food Fragments.** Fragments are lower-cost by-products of another food manufacturing process, such as brewer's rice (a waste product of the alcohol industry) and wheat bran (the fibrous hull removed from the nutritious wheat kernel). Most foods contain at least one fragment, as makers attempt to keep the food affordable. Beware of a product that contains

several fragments of a single food. Some food makers do this to disguise an excess of a low-value ingredient. Remember, the law dictates that each ingredient is listed separately by weight. So when you see a list of ingredients that begins "lamb, rice flour, rice bran, brewer's rice..." you should be aware that there is far more rice in the product than lamb.

- ▼ **Meat by-products.** We've moderated our stance on meat by-products; we used to discard any food that contained them. We've been convinced, however, that fresh by-products may offer more nutrient value than a rendered meat meal. But using an animal by-product (or more than one animal by-product) for a food's main protein source is indicative of a lower-quality product. We'd prefer to see these products play a supporting role to whole meats or meat meals, say, somewhere below the top five ingredients. However, please note our ban on "generic" ingredients (below); no "animal by-products" allowed.

### Hallmarks of a low-quality dry food:

- ✗ "Generic" fats or proteins. "Animal fat," for example, can be just about anything: recycled grease from restaurants, or an unwholesome mystery mix of various fats. In this case, a preferable ingredient would be "beef fat" or "chicken fat." "Animal protein" and "poultry protein" are far inferior to "beef protein" or "chicken protein."
- ✗ Artificial preservatives (including BHA, BHT, or Ethoxyquin).
- ✗ Artificial colors. Your dog doesn't care what color his food is. He doesn't need a daily — lifetime — exposure to these unnecessary chemicals.
- ✗ Propylene glycol. Ditto for this chemical, which is added to some "chewy" foods to keep them moist.
- ✗ Sweeteners. Dogs, like humans, have a taste for sweets. Corn syrup, sucrose, ammoniated glycyrrhizin, and other sweeteners are sometimes added to lower-quality foods to increase their appeal. But dietary sugar can aggravate health problems in dogs, including diabetes.

maker has gone out of business.

In every case, all the different varieties of "flavors" of a given dog food line are also approved. For example, we like the entire "Prairie" line of foods made by Nature's Variety, not just the lamb-based food. However, some manufacturers (such as Royal Canin) makes several different lines or "families" of foods, targeted to very different price points and formulated accordingly. Unless we indicated an additional line or family was approved, assume it is not.

The following are things we did NOT do when we selected our past and new "Top Dry Foods."

- **We DID NOT** reject any of our past selections. All of our past selections (listed on page three) still meet our selection criteria.
- **We DID NOT** conduct lab tests to make sure the "Guaranteed Analysis" printed on the label accurately reflects the contents; that's the job of state feed control officials.
- **We DID NOT** inspect manufacturing plants or verify ingredient claims. For example, some companies say they use organically grown foods, or human-grade ingredients. At some point in the future, we'll be asking manufacturer's to show us proof that these ingredients are what they say they are. We'll keep you posted.
- **We DID NOT** select foods on the



The words "Holistic" and "Natural" appear on the labels of many new foods, including our selections - but that's certainly not why we picked 'em. Neither phrase has any practical meaning; it only suggests the audience the manufacturer is targeting.

**basis of protein or fat content;** more is not always better. Some dogs need more; some dogs need less. It's a good idea to note the protein and fat content of any food that seems to suit your dog, as well as the levels in foods that distress him. This information can help you make future selections.

- **We DID NOT** examine every food on the market. That would be impossible! You may find a food that looks as good or better than ours. Good for you! Send us some information about it; we'd love to share.
- **We DID NOT** rank-order the foods. They are presented in alphabetical order.

### Choose three or four

We can't say it enough, so we'll say it in capital letters: THERE IS NO SINGLE "BEST" FOOD. We still like all the foods we've chosen in past years, and we like all these newer foods, too.

To determine which ones might be

most appropriate for your dog, you will have to try a few. All dogs are different; some do better on higher-protein foods, some do better on lower-protein foods. Some can't digest chicken. Some break out if they eat wheat. Try a likely candidate for a month or two. If your dog has problems, it doesn't mean it's a "bad" food; it just disagrees with your dog. Give the food away and try another one!

If, on the other hand, your dog has had chronic health problems, such as infected ears, itchy paws, or runny eyes, and these symptoms clear up, you're on the right track. A good dog food will contribute to a healthy coat, good energy level, balanced temperament, and flawless health.

Don't feed only one food for the rest of your dog's life either! That's a surefire way to help him develop food allergies or intolerances. Any nutrient deficiency, excess, or imbalance expressed in a food can become entrenched in your dog's body if that's all he's fed for years on end. (See "Variety Is the Spice of Life," WDJ June 2001, for more information about the importance of occasionally switching foods.)

*Nancy Kerns is editor of WDJ. Dry food reviews have appeared in each February issue since 1998.*

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