

# CHANGING DIETS



Beaconsfield

Veterinary Centre

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As your pets reach different stages of their lives, they often need to change their diet.

The reasoning behind diet changes can be due to many different factors.

Some of these may be:

- ✚ Medical reasons, i.e. they may require specifically balanced diets for different diseases, such as, Hills® C/D diet for urinary crystals, Hills® K/D diet for kidney function or Hills® I/D diet for gastrointestinal health.
- ✚ Weight loss.
- ✚ Their life stage, e.g. puppy, adult and senior diets.

Whatever the reason behind diet change, the hardest part can often be convincing your pet that the new diet is what they need to eat!

The most important thing to remember when changing diets is to **TAKE IT SLOW!** A sudden change in diet can often come as a shock to your pets, particularly if the food has a very different taste or texture, and a negative 1<sup>st</sup> impression can mean a constant battle between you and your pets at dinner time!

## First Introduction

It is essential to make sure that their first introduction to the new diet is a positive one.

This can be done by using pieces of the new diet as a treat when they have done something good, as positive reinforcement.

Once they have tasted the diet, you can start slowly introducing the new diet into the old one. This should be done gradually over a 1 week period minimum (when dealing with fussy cats this can take up to 4 weeks!).

This not only gets them used to the new flavour, but also allows time for their stomach to become used to the new food, which avoids upset tummies!

For example; the 1<sup>st</sup> meal should include 90% old diet, 10% new diet. This can mean simply adding a few kibbles to the bowl.

As your pet becomes accustomed to the new diet, you can slowly increase the percentage of new diet, and reduce the old diet, by ~10% each time.



## Swapping bowls.

Often animals notice the smallest of changes, such as a different food bowl. For some particularly fussy animals, this can be enough to make them wary of their new food and completely turn them off!

A nifty idea can be to buy a new food bowl, and place the old diet in the new bowl.

Then place the new diet in their old bowl and place the bowls next to each other.

This change can often be enough to entice the animal to the new food, as they smell and see familiarity in the old food bowl.

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## **Making feeding time fun.**

For most pets, feeding time is the best time of the day, so why not make it a game too? Turning feeding time into play time can help encourage lazy animals to exercise, and also create a fun bonding experience between you and your pet. Here are a few suggestions on how you can do this:

- **Scatter Feeding.**

For dogs, throw a small handful of food out into an open area of grass, so the dog can sniff out their treats. This not only gives them an introduction to the new food, but also provides environmental enrichment and stimulation for those energetic dogs!

You can also do this for playful cats by simply throwing a small handful of dry food into a small area, such as the kitchen or somewhere in the house with tiled floors.

- **Using feeding toys.**

The clinic has a great variety of toys, which are created to entertain your pet whilst providing food! However, you can also make feeding toys at home with everyday items.

For example, for particularly active cats you can make a feeding toy using a cardboard box and toilet paper rolls. This works as it plays to a cats' wild instincts of reaching for food with their paws.

Take an empty cardboard box and sticky tape some toilet paper rolls in there. Place a few pieces of kibble in each roll, then lay it on its side. This forces your cat to think of a way to get their dinner out (see picture).



If you have any questions regarding changing your pet's diet, please feel free to contact the clinic on 9769 8777.

Happy Feeding!

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