

# Vegan diets for dogs may be linked with better health, and could be less hazardous, than meat-based diets

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Two dogs running outside. Credit: Alvan Nee, Unsplash, CC0 ([creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/](https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/))

A survey study of the guardians of more than 2,500 dogs explored links

between dog diet and health outcomes, suggesting that nutritionally sound vegan diets may be healthier and less hazardous than conventional or raw meat-based diets. Andrew Knight of the University of Winchester, U.K., and colleagues present these findings in the open-access journal *PLOS ONE* on April 13, 2022.

Many factors may influence dog guardians to choose unconventional diets for their pets, including concerns regarding the environment, the treatment of animals used as food, and the health of their pets. However, research into the [health effects](#) of conventional versus unconventional dog diets has been limited.

To help clarify the potential health effects of different dog diets, Knight and colleagues analyzed [survey data](#) from guardians of 2,536 dogs fed either a conventional meat, [raw meat](#), or vegan diet. The survey included questions about the dogs' health, including the number of veterinary visits, use of medications, and specific dog health disorders.

Statistical analysis of the survey results suggested that, overall, dogs on conventional diets were less healthy than dogs on raw meat or vegan diets. Dogs on raw meat diets appeared to be healthier than those on vegan diets. However, the researchers noted several factors that prevent a conclusion that raw meat diets are healthier. For one, in the study, dogs on raw meat diets were significantly younger than dogs on vegan diets, which could help explain why they appeared to be healthier. Additionally, dogs on raw meat diets were less likely to be taken to a veterinarian; while this could be a sign of better health, prior research has indicated that guardians of dogs on raw meat diets are less likely to seek veterinary advice.

Further research is needed to confirm whether a raw meat or a [vegan diet](#) is associated with better dog health outcomes. The researchers suggest that large-scale, cross-sectional, and longitudinal studies of dogs,

maintained on different diets, which utilizes data such as results of veterinary clinical examinations and veterinary medical histories, could yield results of greater reliability. Still, prior research has linked raw meat diets to increased risk of pathogens and nutritional deficiencies. In [light](#) of both the new and prior findings, the researchers suggest that a nutritionally sound [vegan diet](#) may in fact be the healthiest and least hazardous choice for dogs.

The authors add: "We believe our study of 2,536 dogs is by far the largest study published to date, exploring [health outcomes](#) of dogs fed vegan and meat-based diets. It analyzed a range of objective data, as well as owner opinions and reported veterinary assessments of health. It revealed that the healthiest and least hazardous dietary choices for [dogs](#), are nutritionally sound vegan diets."

**More information:** Vegan versus meat-based dog food: Guardian-reported indicators of health, *PLoS ONE* (2022). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0265662](#)

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