Food Therapy for Pets

WHAT IS TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE (TCM) FOOD THERAPY?

• According to TCM foods are like herbs and can be selected appropriately to tonify, cleanse and regulate the body, to restore and maintain balance of Yin and Yang

• TCM classifies food according to energetic effects (for example, foods that are warming and nourishing and foods that cool and eliminate/drain)

• Western nutrition focuses primarily on calories, carbohydrate, fat, protein and vitamin content of food

TCM PRINCIPLES

• Everything in the world can be described, explained, and further divided into Yin and Yang

• Yin = cool, dark, still, inward, downward, feminine, hypo function

• Yang = hot, bright, active, outward, upward, masculine, hyper function

• Yin & Yang: "You become what you eat"

• Balance of Yin & Yang = health

Table 1: Five Tastes & Five Element Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taste</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Function</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweet</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Relaxes, Nourishes, Supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pungent (Spicy)</td>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>Moves, Expands, Dries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Moistens, Descends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sour</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>Contains, Moistens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitter</td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Cools, Dries, Moves, Calms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Thermal Properties of Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Yin &amp; Yang balanced</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cool/Cold</td>
<td>Yin</td>
<td>Fast-growing foods, foods with high water content, raw foods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm/Hot</td>
<td>Yang</td>
<td>Slow-growing food(root vegetables), highly processed foods (kibble)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMMERCIAL FOOD VS. "NATURAL" FOOD

- Natural diet of canines and felines (in the wild)
  - Food that is “in season” in a particular geographic area/climate
  - Cats: high-protein, high-moisture, meat-based diet with moderate amount of fat, and approximately 3-5% of calories from carbohydrates
  - Cats have no dietary need for carbohydrates and have a decreased capability of processing and digesting carbohydrates
  - Dogs ate prior to domestication: meat, fish, insects, grasses, roots, bark, eggs, moss, mushrooms, flowers, soil, feces from other animals; after domestication their diet expanded to include cooked foods and grains (depending on geographic area and culture)

- Commercial foods = "food for the masses", do not take into account individual needs, origin of ingredients unknown to consumer, highly processed, high in carbohydrates (especially kibble), contain additives and large amount of non-animal proteins (cheaper), ingredients lack variety, diversity, quality, and freshness

- Home-made food = closest to "natural", origin of ingredients are known, diet can be individualized, local ingredients, minimally processed, fresh & wholesome (organic), prepared with love

BASIC RULES FOR HOME-MADE PET DIETS

- Adult healthy dogs: 1 part protein, 1 part fat, 1 part carbohydrate
- Adult healthy cats: 5 parts protein, 4 parts fat, 1 part carbohydrates/fiber
- Young, growing pets: higher meat & fat contents, raw foods
- Older pets: higher carb/fiber content, cooked food
- Arctic breeds (Siberian Husky): diet higher in protein, fat, raw bones
- Toy breeds (Shih Tzu): cooked foods, no raw bones, more carbohydrates
• **Protein sources**
  - Neutral: beef, pork, dairy products, lentils, chicken eggs, sardines
  - Warm/Hot: chicken, turkey, lamb, venison
  - Cool: duck, cod, rabbit, tofu

• **Fat sources:**
  - Avocado, egg, meat fat, fish/chicken skins, shrimp, butter, coconut oil, vegetable oil

• **Carbohydrate sources (dogs)**
  - Neutral: white rice, brown rice, quinoa, yam, white potato
  - Warm: sweet rice (mochi), oats, sweet potato
  - Cool: pearl barley, buckwheat, corn, millet

• **Vegetables & Fruits**
  - Neutral: beet root, beet greens, cabbage, shitake mushrooms, figs
  - Warm: asparagus, green beans, kale, cherries, strawberry
  - Cool: alfalfa sprouts, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cucumber, apples

• **Spices:**
  - Warm: garlic (don't give to cats!), basil, fennel seed, dill, ginger
  - Cool: peppermint, marjoram

• **Bones:** never feed baked, broiled or barbecued bones, feed bones after a meal, feed raw or after cooking for a long time (> 1 hour), use bonemeal instead for brachiocephalic dogs

• **To make food more Yang:** Grill, bake, pressure cook, salt, dehydrate food

• **To make food more Yin:** Boil, ferment, refrigerate, add water, sweeten food

**FOOD AS MEDICINE: DISEASE PREVENTION & RESTORATION OF BALANCE**

• Feed local and feed with the seasons (Pacific Northwest)
  - Summer (hot and dry): feed neutral, cool and moisturizing foods, cook food briefly or feed raw
  - Winter (cold and damp): feed warming foods, cook foods at higher temperatures (frying, roasting)
• Avoid extremes (e.g., don't feed only foods that are Yang)

• Consider general temperature preference of your pet (is he/she seeking warmth or cold areas in the home?)

• Consider the TCM properties of certain diseases:
  • **Yang conditions**: acute fever & infection, abscesses, acute hepatitis, injuries, arthritis with inflamed and swollen joints, hot spots, moist skin infections, hyperactivity, aggression, agitation
  • **Yin conditions**: chronic fever, anemia, diabetes, kidney disease, dry skin, generalized weakness, chronic digestive problems, hypothyroidism
  • **Skin disease/ear infections** often characterized by Heat and Damp (discharges, redness, inflammation): feed cooling foods (esp. in summer), avoid hot foods (kibble, lamb, spices)
  • **Chronic Kidney Failure and arthritis** often characterized by Cold (pet is seeking warmth): feed warming foods, add warming spices (lamb, cinnamon, ginger)
  • **Inflammatory Bowel Disease** (common in older cats): feed warming and easy to digest, cooked foods (bone broth), add fiber to increase moisture content of feces (flax seeds, pumpkin)
  • **Hyperthyroidism** (cats): feed cooling foods
  • **Hypothyroidism** (dogs): feed warming foods
  • **Diabetes**:
    • Cats: diet with high protein & fat content (no kibble);
    • Dogs: keep diet consistent, include barley (high in fiber and low glycemic index)

**RESOURCES**

Food Energetics Chart

How to make cat food; lists of protein, carb and fat contents of commercial foods
  [http://www.catinfo.org](http://www.catinfo.org)

Book: “Fresh Food & Ancient Wisdom” by Dr. Ihor Basko

Book: “Dr. Becker’s Real Food for Healthy Dogs and Cats”