

LV= reports dog owners swap bones for broccoli

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The latest report from insurance provider LV= has shown that health concerns have led to a surge in pet owners changing their pets' diets and swapping meat for vegetables and fruit.

40% of pet owners now feed their pets up to three portions of fruit and veg a day and according to the new research by pet insurer (http://www.lv.com/insurance/pet_insurance) LV= there are now more than 145,000 cats and dogs in the UK on a vegetarian diet.

In turning their animals vegetarian, these pet owners are following celebrity dog-owners such as Alicia Silverstone* and Paul McCartney** who feed their dogs a vegan and vegetarian diet respectively.

One of the main reasons for the trend in vegetable heavy diets is the perceived health benefit, with 42% of pet owners who have increased the number of vegetables in their pets' diet saying they have done so to improve the health of their animal.

16% of pet owners said they simply follow Government nutritional advice for humans, such as eating five portions of vegetable and fruit a day, and apply it to their pet.

According to the report from LV= (<http://www.lv.com/>), other reasons given include the cheaper cost of a vegetarian diet (12%), because organic pet food is a waste of money (29%) and because it's more ethical (4%). Just one in four (24%) of the UK's cats and dogs now exist on a meat-only diet.

The most popular vegetables to give to pets are carrots (19%), potatoes (12%) and peas (11%).

As well as pets eating more vegetables, the LV= research shows that 13% of UK pets are given vitamin or vegetable supplements daily.

Health-conscious owners say they have noticed a range of improvements from their veggie-eating pets, from fewer health problems (27%), glossier coats (21%), and a better digestion (28%), to loss of weight (13%).

Emma Holyer, Spokesperson for LV=, said:

"As this research shows there are thousands of cats and dogs consuming vegetables in their diets without any problems. In fact, these diets are well known for relieving arthritis, skin and fur problems and obesity in dogs.

"However, pet owners thinking of putting their pet on a vegetable only diet should check with their vet. Cats cannot survive on a vegetarian diet and will need specialist supplements, and although dogs can survive, a sudden change in diet is likely to cause problems. Animals are just like humans in that they need a mixture of minerals and vitamins to keep them healthy, and cutting out whole food groups, like protein, can seriously damage their health."

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* Source: nowmagazine.co.uk

** Source: dogs.suite101.com

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Notes to Editors:

The research was carried out on behalf of LV= by YouGov. A nationally representative sample of 2,050 pet owners were questioned online between 9th and 11th September 2008. Results are weighted to be representative of the UK adult population. YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.

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