

# Nutrition: DBL Puppy Program

*Program puppies will each come with a Ziploc bag of food along with feeding instructions when initially being placed with their new raiser. It is important that the program puppy remain on the same brand of food the entirety of their time with their raiser unless instructed otherwise. All program puppies should be eating Purina Pro Plan Large Breed Puppy Chicken and Rice. They will remain on this diet throughout their time with the raiser, when they come back to one of our campuses for formal training, and when they are placed with their client.*

## Feeding Quantities and Maintaining a Healthy Weight

Program puppies between the ages of 8-12 weeks will need to be fed three times a day. The program puppy will most likely receive between ½ - 1 cups three times a day when placed in their new puppy raiser home. The amount will vary depending on the individual program puppy's needs, metabolism, and their activity level. As the program puppy continues to grow, you will need to gradually increase their food intake by a quarter cup. Once the program puppy reaches the age of four months, they will need to be switched over to two feedings a day. By six (6) months of age, the program puppy should be receiving between 1 - 1.5 cups twice a day. This is the amount they will most likely stay on the rest of the time in the puppy raiser home unless otherwise specified by the raiser's area puppy coordinator. Once the program puppy reaches one year of age, they will then need to be switched over to the adult formula.

You can gauge if a program puppy is ready for an increased amount of food by checking what's called a body conditioning score (see chart below). You will notice with the ideal section of the chart, that they mention you can feel a minimal layer of fat over the ribs, that their tuck is visible from the side, and their hips have a visible curve from the bird's eye view. If the program puppy is leaner than ideal, then you will need to increase their food. The same goes for if they are above ideal, raisers may need to either decrease the food, or look for lower calorie training treats. Initially, program puppies will not have the tuck up and noticeable hip curves as they are storing nutrients for their first growth spurt and that is ok. After their first growth spurt you will notice they are starting to look more like a dog and less like a potato. Puppies will go through many growth spurts throughout their puppyhood, and it is important to keep an eye on their bodily changes.

Another great way to tell if the program puppy needs to increase their food intake is by looking at their stool. If the program puppy is healthy but has loose or watery stools, they could potentially be eating too much. If they are healthy but their stool is hard and/or chalk like, it could be a sign that they are potentially being fed too little.

Puppies, especially Labrador retriever puppies, are very food motivated and are often called opportunistic eaters. This is great when utilizing their food motivation in training. However, it becomes problematic when they start to put on too much weight. Labrador retrievers are especially prone to obesity. Obesity can increase the risk for diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and can affect their joints causing osteoarthritis. So, it is very important to maintain a well-balanced diet. If you are unsure when the program puppy will be ready for an increase, please check in with your area coordinator.



Nestlé PURINA

# BODY CONDITION SYSTEM

TOO THIN

1

Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.

2

Ribs, lumbar vertebrae and pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some evidence of other bony prominence. Minimal loss of muscle mass.

3

Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.

IDEAL

4

**Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.**

5

**Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.**

6

Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernible viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.

7

Ribs palpable with difficulty; heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be present.

8

Ribs not palpable under very heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present.

9

Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.



1



3



5



7



9

The **BODY CONDITION SYSTEM** was developed at the Nestlé Purina Pet Care Center and has been validated as documented in the following publications:

Mawby D, Bartges JW, Moyers T, et. al. *Comparison of body fat estimates by dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry and deuterium oxide dilution in client owned dogs.* Compendium 2001; 23 (9A): 70

Laflamme DP. *Development and Validation of a Body Condition Score System for Dogs.* Canine Practice July/August 1997; 22:10-15

Kealy, et. al. *Effects of Diet Restriction on Life Span and Age-Related Changes in Dogs.* JAVMA 2002; 220:1315-1320

Call 1-800-222-VETS (8387), weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CT



Nestlé PURINA

## Feeding Schedule

As mentioned above, our program puppies are very food motivated which means that mealtimes are one of the biggest highlights of their day. This means that feeding schedules can either positively or negatively impact their behaviors. For example, say the program puppy gets fed twice a day, once right before their puppy raiser leaves the house for work, then their next meal happens right after their puppy raiser returns home from work. This can potentially negatively affect the program puppy's behavior since now you have stacked two very exciting events into one causing the program puppy to become overly excited by the raiser's departure and arrival. This could result in creating separation anxiety in the program puppy, especially if there is an upset in routine, like the puppy raiser staying late at work. By doing so the program puppy now has increased frustration and stress. However, if the raiser were to feed the program puppy their meal at least an hour before leaving the house, and an hour after returning, the program puppy will see them as two separate events easing the emotional attachment to both the meal and the puppy raiser.

Also, it is very important that the program puppies are put on feeding schedules and not free fed. Free feeding can potentially lead to behavior and potty-training issues such as resource guarding and having more accidents in the home.

## Utilizing Meals as Training Opportunities

Mealtimes are also a great time to implement some training techniques! When program puppies are between the ages of 8-12 weeks and are being fed three meals a day, this is a great opportunity to create a positive association with their gentle leader, vest, and crate. To do this, pick one item you would like to use for this meal. For this example we will use the vest, holding the vest open with your right hand, lure the program into the vest using a treat in your left hand, once the program puppy has completely walked into the vest, secure the vest then implement the food bowl etiquette (see video in training videos section of the portal) lure the program puppy into the sit position, lower the bowl to the ground and then release the program puppy with the cue "Free!". Once the program puppy has finished their meal, you may take the vest off and put away their food bowl. Only use one item per meal, do not, for example put the vest on the puppy then place them in their crate. We recommend that you rotate each item per meal rather than assigning each item to either breakfast, lunch, or dinner so the program puppy doesn't start expecting that they put the vest on for every breakfast. Assigning the item per meal could potentially lead to the program puppy avoiding that meal if they don't particularly enjoy being in one of the items.

## Training Treats

During training you will be using two types of treats called higher and lower value treats. Higher value treats are what the program puppy would deem exciting and are mostly used when learning a new behavior/cue, or when working in or around highly distracting areas, items, or other stimuli. The purpose of utilizing higher value treats is to regain the program puppy's focus to the handler. Lower value treats are what the program puppy will deem "normal", typically we use the program puppy's kibble as a lower value treat. We utilize lower value treats to reinforce and maintain behaviors. Despite the value, training treats need to be bite size and preferably prepped before the training session for easy delivery. We typically recommend using Zukes Natural Dog Treats for high value treats, they can be easily found in any pet store and are already bite sized. As mentioned above, we recommend utilizing the program puppy's normal kibble for lower value treats.

**Pro Tip:** While on a public outing in a higher distracting area, we recommend mixing the high value treats in with the lower value treats a little bit before heading to your destination. Not only will the scent and flavor of the higher value treats rub off on the lower value treats making them more enticing, but during the outing the program puppy will receive the higher value treat at random resulting in them being more inclined to check in with you more often!

## Water

It is very important to allow the program puppy to have access to fresh water during the day, especially during the warmer months. The only exception to this is during the potty-training stages where we recommend picking up the food bowl 2-3 hours before bedtime to reduce the number of overnight accidents.

***PLEASE NOTE:** Do not switch the program puppy onto another food brand, protein type, or feed them human food unless otherwise specified by your area coordinator.*