



Dr. Cathy Alinovi DVM

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I have to admit I have some strong opinions. And I know some of my opinions are completely contrary to “everything you read on the Internet”. But there’s always a reason I disagree.

So what am I talking about today? Rice.

It’s everywhere. Even conventional veterinarians who are adamantly opposed to people food, they’ll tell you “feed chicken and rice” if your dog has a sensitive stomach or diarrhea or some thing like that.

What’s my problem? There are three aspects that I feel should also be covered:

First, rice is definitely bland for us humans. That BRAT diet thing. Banana, rice, applesauce, toast. So if we have the flu, we’re supposed to eat these bland foods. That’s for humans! There are times what works for humans works for dogs and cats. In the case of a sensitive stomach, it’s absolutely not the case!

Why is that? You might ask

Humans produce lots of amylase. Amylase is a digestive enzyme that breaks down carbohydrates. Specifically rice. Dogs and cats have very little amylase by comparison. And if their intestines are messed up, dogs and cats have even less amylase. So if you feed them rice and their guts are screwed up, you’re likely to make things even worse!

Some people think rice is a good binder. Plug the dog up. I would argue with you that cheese is more likely to plug up the system.

But if you wanted some thing that’s socially acceptable and a little bit easier to digest and known to help with

diarrhea: how about canned pumpkin?

So when we're talking general dietary distress and look at the chicken and rice concept, I would argue that it's more appropriate to feed chicken. Only. Unless of course the dog or cat is sensitive to chicken.

What do we use rice for? Me personally I think it makes my sushi rolls taste absolutely fabulous! But if I eat 75% carbohydrates at every meal, like many common dog food diets, I won't fit through my front door. Because most dogs and cats are neutered, they no longer have the hormonal driven ability to maintain lean, muscular body weight. They are like post menopausal women. Say the word carbohydrate and we all get fat.

We can try to argue that there is nutritional value in rice. Let's be real. It's primarily a very cheap filler, AKA a source of carbohydrates. Carbohydrates turn into sugar. Excess sugar is stored as fat. Rice makes us fat.

Now here's my pet peeve. To explain this, I'm going to give a short science lesson. (by the way, every veterinarian, physician, nurse, chiropractor, healthcare, professional, learns this information the very first year of medical training. Maybe they forget?)

Food is primarily made up of protein, fat and carbohydrate. Sure, there's a little bit of vitamins and minerals but it's mostly protein, fat and carbohydrate. So we eat our food. It goes into the stomach. A well functioning stomach has high levels of acid. The acid breaks proteins down into tiny little pieces called amino acids. The amino acids are absorbed by the body and turned back into muscle. Like, you know, muscle. Or the heart. Because the heart is a muscle. Next the food goes into the small intestines. The duct from the gallbladder is right across the intestinal street from the duct from the pancreas. The gallbladder contains bile. Bile breaks down fat.

So what's left? That's right. Carbohydrates. The primary job of the pancreas is to digest carbohydrates! Not fat. Not proteins. Sure, the pancreas has a small function of digesting fat and protein; the primary job of the pancreas is to digest carbohydrates!

So if a dog has an upset stomach, it's always possible that it has a pissed off pancreas. If there's any possibility at all that the dog has a pissed off pancreas, why in the world would we feed rice which makes the pancreas even more pissed off?

Now you're probably asking yourself why in the world your veterinarian told you that pancreatitis was a fat problem? That is a beautiful question! There is a blood test to evaluate the function of the pancreas. It measures pancreatic lipase. (Lipase is an enzyme that digests fat – AKA lipid.) So if the pancreatic lipase is high, the dog has pancreatitis. But it doesn't mean the illness is a lipid or fat issue, it just means the lipase is high, but we absolutely need to stop feeding freaking carbohydrates because the primary enzyme made in the pancreas is amylase.

Why are 99.7% of veterinarians continuing to tell people that their dog has pancreatitis and absolutely must avoid fat? Marketing. Pure and simple.

It's the pet food companies teaching the veterinarians that it's a fat problem. And it's a matter of forgetting the first year of veterinary school. I kid you not. Every single veterinary student learns in physiology class first year of vet school the primary function of the pancreas is carbohydrates metabolism.

So please. Skip the rice. It's a cheap filler, has very little nutritional benefit and could be making things worse especially in dogs with pancreatitis.