

IBD – The Raw Feeding for IBD Dogs FB group ALTERNATIVE PROTOCOL for Management

Disclaimer: We are not vets. While this approach has been supervised by vets in plenty of IBD dogs, this protocol is more readily embraced by holistic vets than most traditional vets. We recommend you discuss changes with your vet, but many have had to forge ahead on their own due to lack of support (other than from groups like this).

Please note, all dogs react differently to food and supplements. There is no “one size fits all” especially when it comes to IBD. All we have is anecdotal evidence that this works for MOST dogs.

We DO recommend that if your dog has not had recent blood work (within the last three to six months) including the **full** GI panel, please do it. If your dog has been losing weight, additionally check thyroid function (including the Free T4); also check serum fructosamine (in addition to glucose which is normally checked), to rule diabetes in or out. The GI panel is a test that requires a 12 hour fast and should include (and ensure it does) the

- **cPLI** (for pancreatitis, though a negative does not mean your dog doesn't have pancreatitis. The test is very specific, but not very sensitive. Please see [Feline Pancreatitis and fPLI](#) for more information about the accuracy of the PLI test)
- **B12** (cobalamin)
- **Folate**
- **cTLI** (for pancreatic function, checks for exocrine pancreatic insufficiency (“EPI”). In some labs, this test for exocrine pancreatic insufficiency must be requested. As EPI is common in dogs, this is a particularly important test (ESPECIALLY if your dog has been losing weight). PLEASE read about EPI, as this is often misdiagnosed. [Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency in Dogs](#) at Whole Dog Journal.
- And consider the [Canine Microbiota Dysbiosis Index](#) test. As described, “The Dysbiosis Index (DI) is a rapid PCR based assay that quantifies the abundances of 8 bacterial groups and summarizes them in one single number. As a secondary interpretation, the individual microbial profile can predict normal or abnormal conversion of fecal bile acids (i.e., lack of conversion of primary to secondary bile acids). Both interpretations will be listed on the results form.”

- 1) Low B12 with high Folate points to small bowel intestinal overgrowth.
- 2) When diarrhea is present, if there is low B12, diarrhea is unlikely to until B12 is at normal blood serum levels
- 3) If your dog has Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI), nothing will help until your dog is on pancreatic enzymes (NOT “digestive” enzymes, which are usually plant-based).

The basis of this treatment approach:

In humans, IBD has been definitively linked to gut dysbiosis. Probiotics are a central cornerstone in ongoing management and treatment. Please see our file "[What is Canine IBD](#)" for more information. We also recommend you contact [AnimalBiome](#) for information about their pilot [Fecal Microbiota Transplant pill](#).

There is one basic approach that works most of the time. (There is no always, especially not with IBD!).

Traditional vet protocol for IBD is flagyl (metronadizole), steroids, and a prescription or limited ingredient diet. That may stop the symptoms, and the metro may help with an unhealthy bacterial overgrowth (dysbiosis), but it doesn't address the root problem from an ongoing management perspective. (And Tylosin is a better antibiotic choice than metro/flagyl. Too many vets put dogs and cats on metro for long lengths of time. It is meant for short-term use only. Please see our article [Flagyl - Metronadizole - is Genotoxic, Potentially Cancerous, and Neurotoxic](#)). Steroids can be an important tool when there is severe and rampant inflammation, but the goal would be to use them for a short sharp taper (several weeks to several months) while giving your dog food and supplements that help their guts heal, hopefully to the point they successfully wean off the steroids. Those that use raw feeding as the first step in treatment often find they don't need the drugs at all. This is because "IBD" is a diagnosis of exclusion. Many dogs are diagnosed as having IBD without ultrasound or biopsy. The only definitive diagnosis, in fact, is via biopsy.

For many dogs, the gut dysbiosis at the root of the IBD results in food sensitivities. For some, it turns out to be just *something* in commercial food. It may be the grains, gums or thickeners. Also bear in mind that many pet foods identified as having a certain protein also have others not listed on the label. Pet food testing often reveals significant labeling problems. In the end, many people with IBD dogs never uncover what the problem ingredient was. But ditching the commercial food often is all that's needed. And that includes the prescription diets. Almost NONE of the prescription options are species-appropriate, particularly healthy, or anything that can be considered high quality. I haven't reviewed them recently, but in 2010, there wasn't a single Rx food that had no thickeners, which are implied in human IBD.

Yes, this document is blunt. But we see people go insane trying to find the "right" food to buy. Many spend months or years ripping their hair out to find a food their dog will eat that doesn't set them off. Picky dogs are usually picky because they don't feel well. Then everyone says "feed your dog whatever it will eat" to avoid weight loss. Well, all those food make your dog feel nauseous, [many contribute to the inflammation causing the problem](#), and it is a seemingly never-ending cycle. **Get off the merry-go-round and feed your dog a meat-based diet.** FRESH meat and organ. Human Grade. Ingredients YOU control. Or high-quality commercial raw that is

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already nutritionally balanced. Fine. If you are concerned about your homemade food and bacteria, cook it. Though if making cooked food:

- 1) Make a [wise choice as to cooking method](#), because [cooking creates compounds that cause inflammation and stresses the organs](#) by killing the naturally occurring enzymes.
- 2) You can [only use an alternative to bones](#). Cooked bones must NOT be fed to dogs, they are very dangerous. Although we note some IBD dogs may be too damaged to do well with bone at first, and then we do recommend a fresh bone alternative for sources of calcium and trace minerals in IBD dogs (at least when starting the new diet).

Whether raw or cooked, the point remains the same: give your dog's guts real food. Also, some dogs accept cooked food more readily, cooking can help the transition, and cooking it less and less to the point of feeding it raw can be an important transition tool.

No, there is no cure for IBD. But it is possible to reduce the inflammation via diet and probiotics, and guts do heal. Or can. **If you want to know what works most often, this is it.** This is advice you'd likely get from a holistic vet, not (usually) a traditional vet.

This is for ALL IBD dogs, but *especially* if your dog is in crisis, stop ALL food you are currently feeding and do this:

1) **Consider fasting your dog for one day and starting a bland diet OR put your dog on a bland diet** of lean poached turkey breast combined 50/50 with plain pumpkin or sweet potato (cooked). (As discussed by Dr. Karen Becker in [“A Telltale Sign Your Dog Has Inflammatory Bowel Disease.”](#)) If your dog is an adult, this can be fed for a few days to a few weeks, as needed, for your dog's tummy to settle and stabilize. If your dog is a puppy, this should not be fed for more than a few days. If you suspect a protein sensitivity to turkey, go with trimmed (poached) pork loin, your dog has likely been least exposed to it.

2) **Make and feed bone broth.** If a chicken allergy or sensitivity is suspected, use other meat and bones. The two-stage method is still recommended. For dogs, obviously nothing but meat and bones go in the broth (and a dash of vinegar at several points to help leech all the good stuff out of the bones and into the broth). Bone broth not only provides quick nourishment and hydration, the collagen in the bones is 11% L-glutamine, which literally helps repair the intestinal mucosa.

<http://healthypets.mercola.com/sites/healthypets/archive/2013/12/02/pet-bone-broth.aspx>

And see our file on [Bone Broth for Healing](#).

3) **Start human grade, not pet, probiotics.** If diarrhea is not a symptom, use S boulardii (Probiotics for Dogs – Why and Which Ones (pending)) at a maintenance dose. If diarrhea is a problem, use the “treatment dose.” Please join our [Raw Feeding for IBD Dogs Facebook group](#)

for assistance. If you're in Australia, order from iHerb. If you're in Europe, buy Bioglan. The importance of *S. boulardii* cannot be overemphasized. For a summary of research on *S. boulardii*, please see [S Boulardii – Review Studies](#).

IMPORTANT NOTE: There is now a fecal microbiota transplant pill for dogs by [AnimalBiome](#). If your dog has IBD, we HIGHLY recommend this as a method to help restore gut health to your pup. It is oral (in an enteric coated capsule) and should be thought of as a probiotic – but the only one that will colonize. For information on fecal microbiota transplants, please see [Healing Your Pet with a Fecal Microbiota Transplant](#) and [Fecal Transplant: An Amazing Cure You've Probably Never Heard Of](#).

If not utilizing the AnimalBiome FMT pill, it is important to include a bacterial probiotic (typically) with at least *L. acidophilus* and one or more bifidobacterium strains (*Lactobacillus* act in the intestines, bifidobacterium in the colon). We recommend [homemade kefir](#), tripe, raw goat milk, [fermented vegetables](#) or a commercial, human grade probiotic. You want to target anywhere from 20 billion to 100 billion CFU initially (daily, in adult dogs).

Repopulating healthy bacteria is the absolute key in the long-term management of IBD that traditional vets tend to not recognize. The growing body of published research (in humans and our pets) has found that the composition, format, and processing of food has a direct impact on gut microbiota. Thus species-appropriate raw feeding is more critical than we could ever have imagined when it comes to the health of our dogs. There is no such thing (yet) as "animal specific strains" of probiotics outside of the oral gut restoration pills of AnimalBiome (and Fortiflora, which has its place but is not the right probiotic to address the gut dysbiosis of IBD). Science has only touched the very tip of the iceberg when it comes to knowledge of what populates the gut. If you want to use probiotics vs using the fecal microbiome transplant pill, according to one of the lead researchers of the microbiome of our pets (Dr. Jan Suchodolski of Texas A&M), it's best to use studied strains, even those primarily used in humans, as there are benefits across species. Pet probiotics often don't work because they don't have enough active colony forming units, or are single strains, or do not meet their label claims for active colony forming units. Please note that Fortiflora is mostly animal digest, has just one strain (*E. faecium*), and only 100 million CFU. It is very limited in its ability to help an IBD dog. If "probiotics aren't working," it is because your vet didn't give you a probiotic with the correct strains for **your** dog (which can't yet be predicted, the science isn't there yet!), it wasn't given long enough (inflammation took time – often years – to develop, we should not expect it to resolve overnight), or you didn't give your dog enough colony forming units. Doses are guidelines, not rules, and what each dog needs can vary substantially. This is an emerging science, and use of probiotics in our dogs can take trial-and-error – just as it does in human medicine currently.

Note: *L. acidophilus* plays an important role in amino acid uptake. This was seen in research on

gastric by-pass surgeries in humans administered an L acidophilus probiotic post-surgery. Where supplementation with L acidophilus helped those patients lose weight, in dogs with IBD, given the importance of protein in their diets, L acidophilus actually helps them gain weight when there is malabsorption from IBD - especially when combined with (plant-based) digestive enzymes (though pancreatic enzymes are needed when a dog has exocrine pancreatic insufficiency, "EPI"). (Of course, your dog should also be getting B12 shots).

4) **Transition to a balanced homemade or commercial raw (or home-cooked, which can also be used as a transition tool)**. It is very easy to make your own balanced and complete food. Rodney Habib and Dr Karen Becker provide a [simple complete & balanced recipe for adult dogs](#) with easy-to-find ingredients. Ultimately, it is important to have AT LEAST THREE PROTEINS in rotation. Whether you rotate every meal, every day, every week, or every month is up to you and your dogs. But it is imperative not to use just one protein in order to prevent a sensitivity/allergy from developing and to prevent your dog from getting bored and rejecting the food. If your dog is extremely sensitive, you simply have to focus on gut healing, which will happen over time.

Important: Please introduce or change only ONE thing at a time, and make all introductions SLOWLY. This is critical, and it really is best to keep a journal. You cannot know what your dog is reacting to if you make more than one change at the same time. And it can be very important to make any introductions nice and slow so reactions are mild if they are going to happen.

For nausea and vomiting, using slippery elm bark powder syrup half an hour or so before a meal helps. (Add one teaspoon of slippery elm bark powder, preferably organic, to one cup of cold water. Bring to a boil while stirring, then lower to a simmer. Steadily whisk the mixture while it simmers for about five minutes. Pour out of pan into a container, it will thicken as it cools. Store in the refrigerator for up to 4 or 5 days). Some will lap it up, some do better with slippery elm mixed with a bit of water or George's Aloe Vera Juice and sprinkled with some kind of freeze dried powdered treat like chicken, chicken liver, turkey, turkey liver, etc. (To mix slippery elm with either water or George's Aloe Vera, use either 1/8th teaspoon of slippery elm bark powder and ¼ teaspoon of aloe vera juice or water OR use ¼ teaspoon of slippery elm bark powder and ½ teaspoon of aloe vera juice or water. You will have to see which dose works best for your dog). Make sure you know the signs of nausea - any or all of these can be signs of nausea: Wanting food but not eating, sitting near the water dish but not drinking, lip smacking, drooling while eating (can also be tooth related, of course), and grass-eating.

Once or twice a day, it helps to add one-half teaspoon of George's Aloe Vera Juice if you've made the syrup IF you're in the U.S. It's likely not worth having it shipped if you're not, but it has to be George's, it is distilled, so contains no latex (aloe latex is toxic to dogs). You can use Lily of the Desert organic, unflavored **juice (not gel)**, but it is organic and a bit bitter. George's has no taste. The three (SEB syrup, George's Aloe Vera Juice, and probiotics) work

synergistically. Aloe and SEB syrup help heal and soothe, probiotics help restore normal function and reduce inflammation. [Aloe and SEB also work as prebiotics](#), increasing the efficacy of probiotics.

If this approach does not work to relieve the symptoms your dog is exhibiting, let us know. There are other approaches, supplements and options not discussed here, including combinations of traditional and alternative meds. Please make sure to ask ANY questions and/or post for support. That's why we created the Facebook group.

Supporting Links:

On the low B12 and diarrhea:

Article: Kook 2012. *Cobalamin in Gastrointestinal Disease*.

http://www.zora.uzh.ch/72883/1/Kook_2013_NAVC_Cobalamin_in_GI_disease.pdf

Study: Kook et al. 2012. [Evaluation of serum cobalamin concentration in dogs with clinical signs of gastrointestinal disease]. *Schweiz Arch Tierheilkd*. 2012 Nov;154(11):479-86. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23117990>

On L acidophilus and its role in B12 / Folate uptake:

Mohammad et al. 2006. *Plasma cobalamin and folate and their metabolic markers methylmalonic acid and total homocysteine among Egyptian children before and after nutritional supplementation with the probiotic bacteria Lactobacillus acidophilus in yoghurt matrix*. *Int J Food Sci Nutr*. 2006 Nov-Dec;57(7-8):470-80.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17162326>

Article: Woodward et al. 2009, Stanford Medicine News. *Probiotics help gastric-bypass patients lose weight more quickly, Stanford study shows*. <http://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2009/07/probiotics-help-gastric-bypass-patients-lose-weight-more-quickly-stanford-study-shows.html>

Study: Woodward et al. 2009. *Probiotics improve outcomes after Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery: a prospective randomized trial*. *J Gastrointest Surg*. 2009 Jul;13(7):1198-204. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19381735>