

**Title: A Corso Owner's Experience of BARF**

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Summary: BARF is the "back to nature" diet for animals. This is our insight into the diet from a beginners perspective.

He was just 12 months old when he was diagnosed with serious hip dysplasia. MJ our Dogue de Bordeaux was from a reputable breeder, fed on all the foods recommended to us and had his exercise restricted to protect his bones. The reason was, as told to us by one of the top hip replacement specialists in the country, probably genetic due to him being such a young dog, rather than anything we had done feeding or exercise wise.

**Rosco - Ali Bark's Carlo x Luna**



When we got Rosco, our first Cane Corso, from Ali Bark we wanted to take no chances with him. We knew that Ali's dogs had excellent hip scores, which of course is the main consideration when looking for a trouble free pup. Ali recommended we look into feeding on the Barf diet (Biologically Appropriate Raw Food). The book we bought by Dr Ian Billinghurst "Grow Your Pups with Bones" made much sense to us. Dogs, naturally in the wild, survive on a raw food and a diet made up of the bones, muscle and fat of other animals together with fruits and vegetables found in their natural surroundings. One of the most important considerations for a large breed is to help their bones to grow slowly to build up strength gradually.

The thought of feeding our dog raw chicken wings and poultry necks was not exactly appealing and the preparation of the meat, fruit and vegetable patties sounded like hard work but we decided to give it a try for a while. After all, we were told, not all dogs take to this kind of food.

We invested in a food processor to make the patties and a chest freezer to buy supplies of chicken wings, poultry necks, minced beef, liver and a stock of raw bones from the butchers.

### **Recipe**

Our recipe for patties is;

1 kg of raw fruit and vegetables normally from the following list;

Apples  
Pears  
Strawberries  
Grapes  
Bell peppers  
Courgettes  
Broccoli  
Carrots  
Tomatoes  
Leeks  
Cabbage

Any non-starchy fruit and vegetables can be used. Dogs on Barf obtain all their energy from carbohydrates which are present in green leafy vegetables. Spinach is an excellent source although we found that Rosco was not too keen on this.

We add to this a couple of eggs, including shells!!. All of this has to be blended to a complete mush to make the patties. We then add to this a 500g pack of minced beef and half a pack of lamb's liver, half a large carton of natural yoghurt, couple of tablespoons of honey and a few cloves of garlic.

We soon discovered that a large bucket was needed to mix all of this in if we were to make a few weeks worth of food. **WARNING, THIS IS A TIME CONSUMING AND MESSY EXERCISE!!**

The patties are then frozen in bags of 600g each. Dr Billingham recommends a growing pup needs to be fed 10% of its body weight whilst growing and then reducing to 2% when a fully grown adult. We started off the diet with Rosco with precise food measurements but with experience we learned when he needed more or less depending on how he looked. We feed approx 750g of chicken wings in the morning, Rosco's favourite, then a pattie in the evening. We get a supply of raw meaty bones from the butchers which give him great exercise as well. The book points out that raw food is no problems for dogs as they have, as scavengers, evolved to cope with bacteria on food. In fact it helps to boost their immune systems. We have had absolutely no problems with Rosco's health on this score but we do make him eat the raw chicken and bones outside for our own hygiene purposes.

We follow Dr Billingham's recommendation to add various vitamins which are;

Flaxseed Oil  
Fresh Vitamin E  
Sea Kelp

We also add Ester C, Glucosamine and Cod Liver Oil.

### **Who says a leopard can never change its spots!**

Getting a young pup to change onto Barf is one thing but getting a dog accustomed to everyday dog food to change is something else entirely.

Last year we were lucky enough to have another Corso, Ali's Sienna come to live with us as a friend for Rosco. She is a lovely dog but in the initial few weeks worried us with her fussy eating habits. She would quite happily eat what we were having but give her dog food and she would turn her nose up at it regularly. One day we caught her with her head in Rosco's bowl of pattie!! We thought why not see whether she will eat one of her own. Sure enough she absolutely loved them and we have never had another "fussy" day since. She especially likes it when we put a lot of garlic into the patties.

Both dogs are extremely healthy. Rosco's exercise was restricted for the first year but they are both now very fit and agile. We recently had Rosco hip scored and he came back as an overall 4. His skin and coat are in excellent condition and the bones have helped to keep his teeth clean and his breath fresh.

There are many people who believe that this diet is a waste of time. Premium foods have had millions of pounds spent on development and work well for many people and their dogs with no health problems whatsoever. We have absolutely nothing against these foods. It may be that Rosco would have done equally as well with the normal recommended foods and exercise. He is from an excellent line and would have been expected to have a good hip score anyway. We would like to think, however, that Barf has made a some contribution to the score and his health generally.

There are many vets also who believe that the Barf diet is nonsense, but there are those who advocate it as well. We managed to find one who recommends the diet and also sells the chicken wings and poultry necks. The diet does not have to be expensive. Dr Billingham recommends organic foods but we have had to improvise. A good supply of cheap fruit and veg can come from a local market on a Saturday afternoon. Most of our supplies come from the supermarkets cheaper range of fruit and vegetables. Fresh chicken wings can normally be bought quite cheaply from the supermarkets and butchers are normally more than happy to give away their waste bones. Vitamins can be costly unless they are on special offer but some good prices can be obtained for bulk purchases on the internet.

Now that both dogs are on the Barf diet we find that we have to spend an entire evening making a batch to last a couple of weeks. Our next major purchase will probably be a catering size food processor to speed things up.

Barf has worked for us and we would happily recommend to anyone with a large breed. There are

many websites with info on the diet and we would recommend the following websites and books to anyone interested in finding out more about the theories behind the diet.

### **Books**

“Give Your Dog A Bone”

“Grow Your Pups With Bones”

“The Barf Diet”

- all by **Dr Ian Billinghurst**

### **Websites**

[www.barfworld.com](http://www.barfworld.com)

[www.canecorsouk.com](http://www.canecorsouk.com)