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another chapter in feeding green tripe!
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Please Note: This is a modified and updated version of an Article written for the Afghan Hound Review in 1997 titled, "No Guts, No Glory!"

Everyone has to admit, there is nothing more upsetting than finding a flea or tick on your dog. Country life, as romantic as it may sound, is the perfect breeding ground for these parasites.

Several years ago I started looking into natural methods of reducing the flea & tick population. Chemicals may help control a small area, but anything larger than one acre is a problem. The most effective chemicals are also environmentally dangerous and toxic to both humans and animals.

So the Search began for the perfect natural way of keeping these pests under control. Many of the books I read suggested certain plants and grasses that helped repel fleas or ticks. There were also many herbal sprays that would help. The philosophy here was to keep the problem under control...not to annihilate them, although I don't think you will find anyone heartbroken to see fleas or ticks on the endangered species list!

What I found interesting, in almost all of the books I read, was the belief that a truly healthy dog will not be bothered by these parasites. So what did this mean? Natural Rearing. Almost all of the books recommended feeding raw meats, vegetables and grains, raw bones, herbal supplements, fasting one day per week, fresh water supply and plenty of fresh air and exercise.

Our dogs always have plenty of fresh water, fresh air and exercise...a "run with a view", what more could an afghan ask for? Raw meats were the next thing to try. At first, I would buy meat from the grocery store...ground beef, beef heart, lamb and chicken. With the chicken, I would soak it in a grapefruit seed extract and water mixture to kill any salmonella. I did see some improvement over the cooked meat I had been feeding.

Not long after switching to raw meats I heard about feeding green tripe. In Europe it had been used for years and many of the old time breeders swore by it. Problem was finding green (raw, uncleaned) tripe here in the US. The USDA has strict rules about that sort of stuff. One slaughter house, several hours away, required I sign a USDA release form before I could buy it from them. Luckily, I found a local "butcher" that did custom slaughtering. If they did a cow that day, I got the phone call in the evening to come get my tripe...one could not help but feel like Dr. Frankenstein awaiting phone calls for new body parts! In retrospect, I was very thankful. There is no way I would have survived a 2-3 hour trip, especially in the middle of summer, with several cow stomachs in the back of the truck...no matter how they packaged them!

I always heard people talk about how bad the smell was, but until you experience it, you could never imagine how bad it actually is. The first tripe we brought home was in an old cooler in the back of the truck. Even with windows open, in the back of an open truck, it was still horrible. Ten seconds after we pulled into the driveway, the howling began. I have never seen my dogs in such a frenzy.

When I first started using the tripe, I had to open, drain and rinse the excess hay and grass out myself and then of course, cut it up. It was really disgusting, but the dogs loved it and thrived on it. My attire and equipment usually consisted of a heavy duty butcher's apron, latex gloves, several buckets, a hose and one of the biggest knives I could find. I looked like something out of a horror movie!

There are suppliers now that do provide green tripe ground and frozen in small packages. It can, however, be expensive. The advantage, of course, is the convenience and the fact that you don't even need gloves to handle it...just a good hand soap! I have found that Dial antibacterial hand soap works the best.

I have tried the frozen/ground form, but I'm back to the "real thing" - fresh from the cow. I prefer to cut it myself because I like to give bigger pieces to the dogs so they can really work those jaw muscles and it also allows me distribute the fat better to those dogs that need it more. Fat is a concentrated energy source and very important in the diet of hard working and sporting dogs.

Was all of this torture worth it? YES. Within a couple of weeks of when I first started feeding green tripe, I noticed drastic improvements in coat, skin, energy, teeth and stools...less in number, small and hard...a good sign that the canine is efficiently utilizing his food.

The most noticeable improvement was on a very old rescue afghan. When she was turned into the shelter, her age was given as 6yrs old. It wasn't until I was shaving down her mats, that I found a collar with a rabies tag. When I called the vet clinic, they informed me she was 12. Her teeth were terrible. She could not eat kibble and she could barely walk across the backyard. On January 12th, 2000 she turned 17! She has been eating tripe for almost 5 years and can still run with the pack, discipline the "young and restless" and has the most beautiful set of white teeth without ever having dental cleaning done.

We have not been the only ones to notice the benefits of the green tripe diet. In the past couple of years, several other people have been trying it with very pleasant results. They have all noticed better coats...more luster and shine, no more flaky skin, richer colors, etc. Many comments have been made regarding how white their dogs teeth have become...without dental work! Everyone seems happier about the better stools, but they are more impressed by the increased energy level. Many of the older sighthounds have been revitalizing their running careers and have been very successful in competition over the younger dogs. As an example, a few years ago at the ASFA Region 2 Invitational our then 7 ½ year old veteran, sire of our first litter, beat his 2 year old sons for the BOB (his second BOB title at the Region 2 Invitational) and then ran very competitively in the Best In Field run. He had been eating green tripe for at least 1 year at that point in time.

I'm not quite sure if it is related, but we also noticed a change in the two litters we bred. The first litter was before we were using the tripe. As a matter of fact, we started using a muscle meat/tripe mix when the pups from that litter were 3 months old. With the second litter, both sire and dam had been on the tripe for at least 2 years before the breeding. It was a more robust litter than the first. The pups had been on tripe essentially since conception and are far superior, in many ways, to the first litter.

So what makes green tripe the perfect food for the canine. Recently, an analysis of a sample of the packaged frozen tripe was performed by Woodson-Tenant Laboratories, Inc. in Georgia. The results were what many people had speculated but never proven with scientific fact.

The calcium:phosphorous ratio is indeed 1:1, the overall pH is on the acidic side which is better for digestion, protein is 15.1, fat 11.7 and of course it contained the essential fatty acids, Linoleic and Linolenic, in their recommended proportions.

What was surprising to find, was the presence of Lactic Acid Bacteria. Lactic Acid Bacteria, also known as Lactobacillus Acidophilus, is the good intestinal bacteria. It is the main ingredient in probiotics.

Green tripe is also loaded with gastric enzymes, amino acids, and other gastric "juices". The gastric enzymes not only help the cow in digestion, but also aid the canine in digesting and efficiently utilizing his food. The amino acids are necessary for muscular development and, the other gastric juices, I believe, are the best cleaner for their teeth! Because of it's rubbery texture, serving it in large chunks also aids the canine in strengthening it's jaw muscles and has an added benefit as a form of canine dental floss.

Cooking, bleaching or scalding the tripe destroys almost all of the enzymes and amino acids. Freezing destroys some too, but certainly not as many and still manages to keep most of the nutritional content intact. It is also more convenient than burying raw meat underground.

It has been my observation that people, in general, are afraid to feed their dogs raw meat, especially green tripe, because of the ecoli scare. Don't forget, a canine's system can handle much more than we can. After all, when they bring down prey, they usually go for the innards first. If you don't care to think about the hunt scenario, picture the loose neighborhood dog rummaging through everyone's garbage pails.

I know this is all really "hard to stomach", but they really do thrive on it. From couch potato to sport and working dogs, they all will benefit from green tripe.

In conclusion, there is nothing tripe about tripe!

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