

THE DESI CARNIVORE

FROM FIRST BREATH TO GOLDEN YEARS



THE INDIAN DOG PARENT'S GUIDE
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THE DOGGOS

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By

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DEDICATION

To Toughie, Tony & to all the souls who wait by the door—ears perked at the faintest sound of our footsteps, eyes that light with unbridled joy at our return, hearts that forgive our absences without question, and tails that count each second of separation as if it were an eternity.
You taught me love in its purest form.



And to those who taught me everything: Oreo, the three-legged warrior who still outran the garbage truck each dawn despite losing her right front leg to a speeding auto; Kaali, the scarred matriarch who raised seven litters under the flyover while dodging traffic; and Jawan, the rain-soaked puppy I found trembling in front of my store, who grew to chase off the neighborhood bullies terrorizing other strays—my first teachers of survival, long before I presumed to teach anyone else.

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INTRODUCTION

The Holistic Manifesto

"We don't just want our dogs to live—to merely exist on borrowed time with dull coats and cloudy eyes. As their parents, we want them to thrive with muscles rippling beneath glossy fur, alert ears catching every whisper, and

eyes that still spark with puppyhood joy even as gray hairs multiply. And mostly, we just want more time with our babies—more monsoon evenings with them pressed against our legs during thunderstorms, more mornings waking to their cold noses nudging us gently awake, more chances to memorize the exact pattern of their breathing as they sleep beside us. Because even fifteen years of raising, loving, and nurturing these furry children will leave us aching for just one more day."

The Philosophy: Biology in a Chemical World Look at your dog right now. Maybe they

are sleeping on the cool tile floor, belly pressed flat against the stone to seek relief from the relentless Indian heat that permeates even our high-rise apartments. Maybe they are chasing a pigeon on the balcony, ears pricked, muscles coiled, and tail frozen in a point—a tiny wolf in a concrete jungle, their predatory instincts perfectly intact after 15,000 years of domestication.

Now ask yourself a question that most Indian dog parents never consider: *What fuel is powering that body?*

If the answer involves a bag of dry pellets, processed at temperatures exceeding 150°C, containing ingredients unrecognizable to any living creature, and then stored for months in warehouses where the Mumbai humidity slowly degrades whatever nutritional value remained—then you have stumbled upon the great irony of modern pet care. We have taken an animal designed by evolution to thrive on raw prey, and we have reduced their diet to something resembling breakfast cereal.

The University of Helsinki's groundbreaking DogRisk studies have now confirmed what intuition always suggested: puppies fed non-processed, meat-based diets are **61-85% less likely** to develop inflammatory bowel disease as adults compared to their kibble-fed counterparts. A 2025 study tracking Staffordshire Bull Terriers found that kibble-fed dogs developed increased blood sugar, elevated lipids, and gained more weight, while fresh food-fed dogs showed improved metabolic markers across the board.

But this book is not just about food.

It is about understanding that the itchy ears your Labrador develops every monsoon are not a "deficiency of ear drops"—they are a signal from a compromised gut microbiome struggling with inflammatory triggers. It is about recognizing that the anxious pacing during Diwali fireworks is not a behavioral problem to be medicated away—it is a nervous system crying out for nutritional and environmental support that we have failed to provide. It is about seeing the invisible thread connecting the processed kibble in the bowl today to the torn ligament or kidney failure years later.

The Indian Context: Unique Challenges, Unique Solutions

India presents a unique paradox for dog parents. We have one of the oldest relationships with dogs in human history—archaeological evidence from Mohenjo-daro dating to 2500 BCE shows we have shared our homes with canines for over four millennia. Our streets are filled with the Desi dog, one of the most resilient and genetically robust breeds on the planet, naturally evolved to thrive in our climate without the hereditary disorders that plague their purebred counterparts.

Yet we have also inherited the worst of Western pet care—the belief that a bag of kibble is somehow superior to the fresh foods in our own kitchens, the over-reliance on chemical interventions for every minor ailment, the vaccination protocols designed for American suburbs rather than Indian realities.

Consider the climate factor. When your Golden Retriever—bred for the cool, damp Scottish Highlands—pants through a 42°C Delhi summer while breathing air with PM2.5 levels ten times the WHO safe limit, their body is under a stress load that no Western veterinary textbook has prepared us for. The humidity of Mumbai monsoons creates perfect conditions for yeast and fungal infections. The tick-borne diseases endemic to our country—with studies showing **49.7% prevalence** in some regions—require prevention strategies adapted to local realities.

And then there are our festivals. Diwali transforms into a multi-day trauma event for dogs across the nation. Research shows that **49-52% of dogs** exhibit significant fear responses to fireworks, with cortisol levels spiking to dangerous levels. The Holi colors we celebrate with contain chemicals that can cause severe skin reactions in our companions.

This book addresses these realities head-on. Not with imported solutions, but with an approach that honors both ancient wisdom and modern science.

The Holistic Manifesto: What It Means to Be a Desi Carnivore Parent

Modern veterinary medicine has given us incredible tools. We can detect cancer earlier, repair shattered bones, and extend lives in ways unimaginable a generation ago. But somewhere along the way, we adopted an approach that treats symptoms while ignoring causes. A dog develops an ear infection—we prescribe antibiotic drops. The infection returns—stronger drops. It becomes chronic—we blame genetics.

We create a vicious cycle of suppression, managing the symptoms (the smoke) while completely ignoring the root cause (the fire).

The Holistic Manifesto is a rejection of this cycle.

To be a "Desi Carnivore" parent is to stop viewing your dog as a collection of broken parts—an itchy ear here, a limping leg there, a bad tummy today—and start treating the **whole dog**. It means understanding that a recurring ear infection isn't a "deficiency of ear drops"—it is a loud signal from the gut that the fuel you are putting in is causing systemic inflammation. It means realizing that "bad behavior" and destruction isn't spite; it is biological boredom and unspent predatory energy demanding a release. It means seeing the invisible thread connecting the processed kibble in the bowl today to the torn ligament or kidney failure years later.

The Science Behind the Manifesto

This is not a book of opinions. Every recommendation in these pages is anchored in peer-reviewed research, clinical experience, and the emerging science of canine nutrition and longevity.

The gut-brain connection is real. Over **90% of your dog's serotonin**—the "happiness hormone"—is produced in the gut. Dr. Jan Suchodolski at Texas A&M, who received the 2024 AVMA Career Achievement Award for his pioneering work on the canine microbiome, has shown that gut dysbiosis doesn't just cause digestive issues—it affects behavior, immunity, and even cognitive function.

The processing of pet food matters. Advanced Glycation End-products (AGEs) form during the high-temperature manufacturing of kibble through the Maillard reaction. Research shows that the average dog's daily AGE intake is **122 times higher than humans** as a percentage of metabolic body weight. These compounds contribute to inflammation, oxidative stress, and accelerated aging.

Vaccination science has evolved. Dr. Ronald Schultz's duration of immunity studies at the University of Wisconsin have demonstrated that core vaccines provide protection for **seven years or longer**—yet many Indian clinics still recommend annual boosters. The WSAVA 2024 guidelines, updated just last year, provide a science-based approach that balances protection against over-vaccination.

Longevity is not just genetics. The Purina Lifespan Study—a 14-year controlled trial—demonstrated that caloric restriction extended lifespan by **1.8 years (15-16%)**. The Dog Aging Project, now tracking over 40,000 dogs, is revealing the modifiable factors that separate dogs who decline at age 8 from those who thrive at 14.

Who This Book Is For

This guide isn't for everyone. It requires effort, commitment, and a willingness to question everything you thought you knew about dog care.

The Indian Dog Parent: You are willing to cook, question societal norms ("But my vet said kibble is best!"), and change ingrained habits for your dog's wellbeing.

The Skeptic: You know deep down that "Roti and Milk" isn't enough nutrition, but you also suspect that "Kibble and Chemicals" isn't the honest answer either.

The Guardian: You see a soul, a family member, and a responsibility—not just a pet or a security alarm.

This book is **NOT** for someone looking for a magic pill, a one-size-fits-all diet chart, or permission to continue doing what's convenient. It is not for those who want to outsource their dog's health to a brand or a single veterinarian without question.

How to Use This Book

This book is organized by lifecycle stage because a puppy's needs are fundamentally different from a senior's. Each section builds upon the last, creating a comprehensive framework for raising a healthy dog from first breath to golden years.

Part I: The Arrival (8 Weeks to 6 Months) — Covers the critical foundation: creating a chemical-free home, establishing biological rhythms, understanding the immunity paradox, and fueling the growth spurt with ancestral nutrition.

Part II: The Rebel Teenager (6 Months to 1.5 Years) — Navigates the T-Rex phase of adolescence, socialization in urban India, and holistic approaches to the skin issues that plague our humid climate.

Part III: The Prime (1.5 to 7 Years) — Addresses adult dog health: working with vets, optimizing the gut-brain connection, surviving festival stress, avoiding silent killers, and implementing longevity protocols.

Part IV: The Sunset (7+ Years) — Guides you through senior changes, joint health, and nutritional adaptations for the golden years.

Part V: The Soul Connection — The chapters I wish I never had to write, but know you need: on the lessons they teach us, and the hardest goodbye.

Each chapter contains practical action items, India-specific adaptations, and the scientific reasoning behind every recommendation. You don't need to implement everything at once—progress, not perfection, is the goal.

[My Journey: From Ignorance to Advocacy](#)

I didn't always know better.

Like most first-time pet parents in India, I followed conventional wisdom when my puppy arrived. I dutifully purchased the expensive imported kibble with scientific-sounding ingredients. I nodded along at each vaccination recommendation without asking questions. At the first sign of any issue—a scratch, a sneeze, an itch—I reached for whatever medicated solution the vet recommended. I believed I was doing everything right.

Then came the Demodex.

Generalized demodicosis—a condition where microscopic mites that normally live harmlessly on all dogs suddenly proliferate out of control when the immune system fails. My dog lost patches of fur, developed painful skin lesions, and faced a treatment protocol that involved months of harsh chemicals. The conventional approach was clear: kill the mites, suppress the symptoms, repeat as necessary.

But something didn't sit right. Why had the immune system failed in the first place?

Why were we treating the symptom (mite overgrowth) rather than the cause (immune dysfunction)? I started reading—research papers, veterinary journals, books by pioneers in species-appropriate nutrition. What I discovered changed everything.

The highly processed diet was causing chronic low-grade inflammation. The over-vaccination was stressing an already compromised immune system. The chemical parasite preventatives were adding to the toxic load. We weren't supporting health; we were suppressing symptoms while undermining the body's ability to heal itself.

I changed course. Fresh, species-appropriate food. A rational vaccination protocol based on titer testing. Natural parasite prevention strategies suited to our climate. Gut support. Immune support. The results weren't overnight, but they were profound and lasting.

That journey led me to become a certified canine nutritionist and to found The Doggos—a brand built on the principles that transformed my own dog's health. It led me to write the first *The Desi Carnivore*, which reached thousands of Indian dog parents hungry for a different approach. And now it has led me to write this comprehensive lifecycle guide—everything I wish I had known from the very beginning.

A Promise and an Invitation

I promise you this: every recommendation in this book has been tested—on my own dogs, on the thousands of dogs whose parents I've guided, and against the best available science. I'm not selling you a fantasy; I'm offering you a framework that works in the real world of Indian summers, monsoon mud, Diwali chaos, and the daily juggle of busy lives.

In return, I ask for your commitment. Not perfection—we all have days where convenience wins. But commitment to the principle that your dog deserves more than symptom management. That their health is not a problem to be outsourced but a responsibility to be embraced. That every choice, from the food in their bowl to the chemicals on their skin, either builds health or erodes it.

We can't add years to their lives—that's biology. But we can add life to their years. We can ensure that those precious 10-15 years are filled with vitality, not veterinary visits. With energy, not exhaustion. With thriving, not just surviving.

That is the Holistic Manifesto. That is what it means to be a Desi Carnivore parent.

Let's begin.



— Mahiv Amit Chhabra

Mumbai, 2025

Part I: The Arrival

PART I

THE ARRIVAL

Building the Natural Foundation

Focus: 8 Weeks to 6 Months

CHAPTER I: The Chemical-Free Home

“That gleaming tile you just mopped? It's not just your floor—it's your puppy's entire world, a surface they'll sniff, lick, and sleep against during their most vulnerable developmental weeks. What you put on that floor matters more than you think.”

The Invisible Threat: Understanding Chemical Exposure

Before we discuss nutrition, training, or healthcare, we need to address the environment your puppy will inhabit. In the excitement of bringing home a new family member, most Indian dog parents focus on buying the cutest bed, the best food bowl, the perfect collar. Almost no one thinks about the phenol-based floor cleaner that leaves a residue exactly where their puppy will sleep, play, and lick.

The average Indian household uses cleaning products that would never be permitted in environments designed for human infants. Yet we expose our puppies—with their developing immune systems, their tendency to mouth everything, their noses constantly pressed to surfaces—to these chemicals without a second thought.

Research published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* has demonstrated that household cleaning products containing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) can cause respiratory irritation, endocrine disruption, and immune system interference. Dogs, with their higher respiratory rates and ground-level existence, receive exponentially higher exposures than adult humans in the same environment.

The EPA has found that indoor air quality in homes using conventional cleaning products can be **2-5 times more polluted** than outdoor air—even in cities with significant pollution. For a puppy spending 90% of their time indoors, this creates a chronic toxic burden during the most critical developmental window.

The Big Three: Chemicals to Eliminate Immediately

Not all household chemicals pose equal risks. Based on toxicological research and clinical observations, three categories demand immediate attention.

1. Phenol-Based Floor Cleaners

The iconic brown floor cleaner that generations of Indian households have used contains phenol—a compound toxic to both dogs and cats. Phenols are readily absorbed through paw pads and skin, metabolized poorly by canine livers, and can accumulate to cause liver damage, central nervous system depression, and respiratory irritation.

Look at the ingredient list on your current floor cleaner. If you see phenol, cresol, or any compound ending in "-phenol," it needs to go. The popular brands marketed with pine scents often contain pine oil derivatives that metabolize similarly to phenols in dogs.

Symptoms of phenol exposure include:

Excessive drooling or foaming at the mouth, lethargy and weakness, loss of appetite, tremors or uncoordinated movement, dark or bloody urine (indicating liver stress).

2. Ammonia-Based Glass and Bathroom Cleaners

Ammonia creates a double problem for puppies. First, the fumes irritate the delicate respiratory mucosa, causing inflammation in airways that are still developing. Second, ammonia has a scent profile similar to urine—which can confuse house training by marking "appropriate" elimination spots with a smell that says "bathroom" to your puppy's nose. If you've ever wondered why your puppy keeps returning to accident spots even after thorough cleaning with conventional products, the ammonia connection may be your answer. You're inadvertently reinforcing the behavior with chemical signals.

3. Air Fresheners and Plug-In Diffusers

The aerosol air fresheners and plug-in diffusers that seem harmless release a constant stream of VOCs directly into the breathing zone. Studies have linked these products to increased rates of respiratory illness, hormone disruption, and even cancer in humans—with dogs facing proportionally higher exposures due to their smaller body mass and higher respiratory rates.

Essential oil diffusers deserve special caution. While marketed as "natural," many essential oils are toxic to dogs. Concentrated oils from citrus, peppermint, cinnamon, and clove can cause liver damage, respiratory distress, and central nervous system effects in dogs.

The Desi Carnivore Cleaning Kit: Safe Alternatives

Creating a chemical-free home doesn't mean living in filth. It means returning to cleaning methods that our grandmothers used—methods that predate the chemical industry's conquest of Indian households.

Chemical-Free Cleaning Alternatives

Purpose	Replace	With
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Floor Cleaning	Phenol cleaners	Warm water + 2 tbsp white vinegar per bucket
Disinfecting	Bleach products	3% hydrogen peroxide spray (let sit 10 min)
Glass/Mirrors	Ammonia sprays	1 part vinegar : 1 part water
Deodorizing	Air fresheners	Baking soda + good ventilation
Accident Cleanup	General cleaners	Enzymatic cleaners (pet-specific)

The Vinegar Solution: Your New Best Friend

White vinegar deserves special attention. At concentrations used for cleaning (typically 4-5%), vinegar is effective against many bacteria and some viruses while being completely safe for pets. The smell dissipates quickly as it dries, leaving no residue.

Basic Floor Cleaning Recipe:

- 1 bucket warm water
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- Optional: 2-3 drops of dog-safe essential oil (lavender only)
- Mop as usual. No rinsing required. Safe for all floor types except unsealed marble (the acid can etch over time).

Beyond Cleaning: Other Environmental Toxins

Pest Control Products

India's climate makes pest control a year-round necessity, but conventional pesticides pose serious risks. Cockroach baits, ant powders, and mosquito coils all contain compounds that can accumulate in your puppy's system.

Pyrethroid-based mosquito repellents deserve particular caution. While marketed as "safe" because they're derived from chrysanthemum flowers, synthetic pyrethroids can cause tremors, seizures, and death in dogs at high exposures. The mosquito coils burning through the night release particulate matter that damages respiratory tissue.

Safer alternatives: Physical barriers (mosquito nets, door screens), diatomaceous earth for crawling insects (food grade only), boric acid baits placed in inaccessible

areas, electronic mosquito traps instead of chemical repellents. If your puppy has access to outdoor areas, the landscaping chemicals become equally important. Fertilizers, weed killers.

Human Medications: The Hidden Danger

The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center reports that human medications are the **number one cause of pet poisoning calls**—not cleaning products, not plants, but the pills we leave on nightstands and countertops.

Particularly dangerous:

NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen): Can cause kidney failure and stomach ulcers

Paracetamol/Acetaminophen: Destroys red blood cells and liver

Antidepressants: Can cause serotonin syndrome

Blood pressure medications: Can cause fatal drops in blood pressure

Xylitol-containing products: Sugar-free gum, candies, even some peanut butters

Store all medications in closed cabinets. Treat dropped pills as emergencies—find them before your puppy does.

The Pocha Revolution: Retraining Your Household

Implementing these changes often meets resistance. Everyone has opinions about cleaning. The familiar smell of that phenol cleaner has become associated with "clean" for generations.

Case Study: The Mystery Skin Irritation

Bruno, a 4-month-old Golden Retriever in Bangalore, developed persistent skin irritation—red, itchy patches on his belly and paws that wouldn't respond to medicated shampoos or antihistamines. Three vet visits and ₹8,000 later, the family was considering allergy testing. During a nutrition consultation, a simple question revealed the answer: they had recently switched to a new "extra-strong" floor cleaner to handle monsoon mud. The cleaner left an invisible residue that Bruno absorbed every time he lay on the cool floor—which was constantly, given Bangalore's mild climate. Within two weeks of switching to vinegar-based cleaning, Bruno's skin cleared completely. No medications. No expensive allergy tests. Just the removal of an environmental toxin.

The 48-Hour Home Detox Protocol

Before your new puppy arrives—or this weekend if they're already home—conduct a comprehensive chemical audit.

Day 1: The Audit

- Collect every cleaning product in your home—under sinks, in bathroom cabinets, utility areas
- Read ingredient lists. Flag anything containing phenol, ammonia, bleach, or artificial fragrances
- Check pest control products for pyrethroids and metaldehyde
- Identify air fresheners and plug-in diffusers
- Secure all human medications in closed cabinets

Day 2: The Replacement

- Remove flagged products from the home (give to a neighbor without pets or dispose responsibly)
- Stock up on: white vinegar, baking soda, 3% hydrogen peroxide, enzymatic pet urine cleaner or any natural available floor cleaner
- Deep clean all floors with plain hot water to remove chemical residue
- Open windows for thorough ventilation
- Brief household members on the new protocols.

Chapter 1 Checklist:

- ☐ Audit all cleaning products for phenol, ammonia, and artificial fragrances
- ☐ Replace phenol floor cleaner with vinegar solution
- ☐ Remove all plug-in air fresheners and aerosol sprays
- ☐ Secure human medications in closed cabinets
- ☐ Check pest control products and replace with safer alternatives
- ☐ Purchase enzymatic cleaner for accident cleanup
- ☐ Brief household staff on new cleaning protocols
- ☐ Deep clean floors with plain hot water before puppy arrival
- ☐
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A chemical-free home is the foundation upon which everything else in this book builds. You can feed the most perfect species-appropriate diet, but if your puppy is absorbing toxins through their paw pads every time they walk across your freshly mopped floor, you're undermining your own efforts. Start here. Start today.



CHAPTER II: The First Night

Understanding Biological Rhythms

"The crying you hear tonight is not manipulation. It is the sound of a creature whose entire world has just disappeared—every familiar smell, every littermate's warmth, every rhythm they've ever known."

The Biology of Separation: What Your Puppy Is Actually Experiencing

The first night in a new home is one of the most traumatic experiences in a puppy's life. Understanding the biology behind their distress—rather than dismissing it as "drama" or "manipulation"—is the first step toward helping them adjust without creating long-term anxiety patterns.

For the first eight weeks of life, your puppy has never been alone. Not for a single moment. They slept in a puppy pile, feeling the heartbeats and breathing rhythms of their siblings. They woke to their mother's scent—the most comforting smell their developing brain knows. Their entire nervous system has been calibrated to expect constant contact.

Then you brought them home.

Suddenly, every familiar scent is gone. The heartbeats are gone. The warmth is gone. To a puppy's primitive brain, being alone in the dark equals death. In the wild, a separated puppy wouldn't survive the night—predators, cold, starvation. The desperate crying you hear is a survival mechanism designed to bring the pack back.

This isn't anthropomorphism. Research published in *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* has measured cortisol levels in newly separated puppies—the stress hormone spikes to levels comparable to those seen in human PTSD patients. The puppy's body is experiencing genuine physiological crisis.

The Cortisol Connection: Why Early Stress Matters

The conventional advice—"let them cry it out, they'll self-soothe"—is not just cruel, it's biologically counterproductive. Research on early-life stress in dogs has revealed lasting consequences:

HPA Axis Dysregulation: Chronic early stress alters the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, creating adult dogs that over-respond to minor stressors.

Separation Anxiety Foundation: Puppies who experience prolonged distress during the critical socialization window are more likely to develop clinical separation anxiety as adults.

Immune Suppression: Elevated cortisol suppresses immune function at exactly the age when puppies need robust immunity most.

Gut Microbiome Disruption: Stress hormones alter gut flora composition, potentially contributing to digestive issues and food sensitivities .

The goal of the first night isn't to "train" your puppy. It's to provide enough security that their cortisol levels can return to baseline while they gradually adapt to their new reality.

The Desi Carnivore First Night Protocol

This protocol is designed to minimize cortisol spikes while establishing healthy sleep patterns from day one.

Step 1: The Evening Setup (2-3 Hours Before Bed)

Physical Exhaustion:

A tired puppy sleeps better. In the hours before the first bedtime, engage in **age-appropriate play**—not marathon exercise, but mental stimulation and gentle physical activity that depletes energy reserves without over-exhausting a young body.

Short play sessions (5-10 minutes) with rest breaks

Exploration of the new home (supervised)

Simple scent games (hide a treat, let them find it)

Gentle handling and touch conditioning

The Pre-Bed Meal:

Feed the last meal 3-4 hours before intended bedtime. This allows complete digestion and a final potty break before settling. A slightly larger portion (within healthy limits) can help maintain blood sugar through the night—puppies can experience mild hypoglycemia that contributes to restlessness.

The Wind-Down:

The hour before bed should be calm. Dim the lights (this matters for melatonin production). Turn off loud television. Keep voices soft. You're signaling to your puppy's circadian system that it's time to transition toward sleep.

[Step 2: The Sleeping Setup](#)

Where your puppy sleeps on the first night sets the foundation for months to come. The Desi Carnivore approach prioritizes attachment security over arbitrary rules about crate training or independence.

Option A: The Bedside Crate (Recommended)

Place a crate or enclosed bed right next to your bed—close enough that you can dangle your fingers through the bars. Your puppy can smell you, hear your breathing, and feel your presence without being in the bed itself. This satisfies their need for proximity while establishing appropriate boundaries.

Option B: The Gradual Distance Method

If the eventual goal is sleeping in another room, start with the crate in your bedroom and move it progressively farther over 2-3 weeks. Night 1-3: beside the bed. Night 4-7: across the bedroom. Week 2: just outside the bedroom door. Week 3: in the desired final location.

Option C: Co-Sleeping (With Precautions)

Yes, this is acceptable—and in many ways aligns with how dogs have slept with humans for thousands of years. If you choose co-sleeping: use a puppy-safe bed barrier, ensure the puppy cannot roll off, and prepare for a long-term arrangement, as it's very difficult to transition away from once established.

[Step 3: The Comfort Toolkit](#)

Several tools can make the first night significantly easier:

The Heartbeat Simulator: Products like the Snuggle Teddy contain a battery-powered "heartbeat" that mimics littermate presence. Research at the University of Bristol found that puppies with heartbeat toys showed significantly lower stress behaviors than those without. A simple alternative: a ticking clock wrapped in a soft blanket.

The Scent Bridge: Before picking up your puppy, send a blanket or t-shirt to the breeder to be rubbed on the mother and littermates. This "scent bridge" carries familiar smells into the new environment. Alternatively, an old t-shirt you've worn for a day provides your scent for comfort.

The Warm Water Bottle: Fill a water bottle with warm (not hot) water, wrap it in a towel, and place it in the sleeping area. This mimics the body heat of littermates. Check temperature carefully and rewarm as needed through the night.

Calming Music: Studies have shown that classical music—particularly pieces with a tempo around 50-60 beats per minute—reduces stress behaviors in dogs. Reggae also tests well. Avoid heavy metal and pop music, which increased stress indicators in shelter dog studies. Keep volume low; dogs hear much better than humans.

The Emergency Comfort: If nothing works and your puppy is in genuine distress (not just fussing), it's okay to bring them into your bed for the first few nights. A well-adjusted adult dog is more important than rigid adherence to a training plan. You can work on sleeping independence once they've built trust in their new environment.

Establishing Circadian Rhythm: The 7-Day Protocol

Dogs are crepuscular animals—naturally most active at dawn and dusk. But they're also highly adaptable to human schedules. The first week establishes patterns that will persist for years.

Sample Puppy Schedule (8-12 Weeks)

Time	Activity
6:30 AM	Wake, immediate potty, short play
7:00 AM	Breakfast
7:30 AM	Potty, supervised play/exploration

9:00 AM	Nap in crate/pen/bed (1.5-2 hours)
11:00 AM	Wake, potty, short training session
12:00 PM	Lunch
12:30 PM	Potty, play/socialization
2:00 PM	Afternoon nap (2-3 hours)
5:00 PM	Wake, potty, evening play
6:30 PM	Dinner
7:00 PM	Potty, calm evening activities
9:00 PM	Wind-down, dim lights
10:00 PM	Final potty, bedtime
2-3 AM	Night potty break (if needed)

The Sleep Science: How Much Is Enough?

Puppies need far more sleep than most owners realize:

1. **8-10 weeks:** 18-20 hours per day
2. **3-6 months:** 15-18 hours per day
3. **6-12 months:** 14-16 hours per day
4. **Adult dogs:** 12-14 hours per day

Sleep is when growth hormone is released, when memories consolidate, when the immune system rebuilds. A sleep-deprived puppy—one kept awake for "more socialization" or "more training"—is a puppy whose development is being actively hindered.

The "overtired puppy" paradox: Just like human toddlers, puppies who miss their sleep windows become hyperactive and impossible to settle, not drowsy. If your puppy is biting more, unable to focus, and running in frantic circles, they probably need a nap, not more exercise.

[The Case for Enforced Naps](#)

Puppies don't self-regulate sleep well. In a stimulating home environment, they'll push past exhaustion trying to engage with everything happening around them. This is why **enforced naps**—placing the puppy in their crate or pen for scheduled rest periods—are essential.

The general rule: for every hour of awake time, plan 2 hours of sleep. A puppy who's been awake for 45 minutes to an hour should be settling for a nap. Cover the crate with a blanket to reduce stimulation. Don't wait for signs of tiredness—by then, they're often overtired and harder to settle.

[Night Waking: The Bladder Reality](#)

Puppies have small bladders and limited sphincter control. Expecting an 8-week-old puppy to sleep through the night without a potty break is biologically unrealistic. Here's what to expect:

1. **8-10 weeks:** Can hold 2-3 hours maximum
2. **10-12 weeks:** Can hold 3-4 hours
3. **3-4 months:** Can hold 4-5 hours
4. **4-6 months:** Can usually sleep through (6-8 hours)
5. **6+ months:** Should sleep through consistently

Part I: The Arrival

Set an alarm for the middle of the night in the first weeks—better to wake a sleeping puppy for a calm potty break than to be woken by a distressed puppy who has already had an accident. Gradually extend the interval as bladder capacity increases.

[The Indian Context: Climate Considerations](#)

Indian summers present unique challenges for puppy sleep: Heat and

Sleep: Puppies struggle to regulate body temperature. In homes without AC, provide cooling options: a damp towel to lie on, a frozen water bottle wrapped in fabric, elevated mesh beds that allow air circulation beneath. Avoid direct AC drafts on the sleeping puppy, which can cause respiratory issues.

Monsoon Adjustments: The humidity of monsoon season makes puppies drink more and, consequently, need to urinate more frequently. Adjust expectations during rainy months—even a puppy who was sleeping through may regress temporarily. The sound of rain can also be either soothing or distressing; observe your individual puppy's response.

Street Noise: Indian streets don't sleep. Auto-rickshaws, vendors, late-night revelers—the sound environment is very different from quiet Western suburbs. White noise machines or fans can help mask unpredictable sounds. Puppies raised with consistent background noise often develop better sound tolerance than those in silent environments.

Case Study: The Midnight Howler

Simba, a 9-week-old Indie puppy adopted in Chennai, howled inconsolably every night for the first week. The family tried everything: crate training, sleeping in the living room, even letting him in the bed—where he would settle momentarily before howling again. The breakthrough came when they discovered he wasn't distressed about separation—he was overheated. Chennai's April temperatures, combined with a fluffy bed the family had bought, created a heat trap. Switching to a cooling mat and moving the sleeping area near a window with cross-ventilation resolved the howling within two nights. Lesson: Before assuming behavioral issues, rule out physical discomfort. India's climate makes temperature regulation a common hidden cause of sleep problems.

Common First-Week Mistakes

"Wearing them out" before bed: Over-exercise leads to an overtired puppy who can't settle. Moderate activity is better than exhaustion.

Inconsistent responses to crying: Sometimes ignoring, sometimes responding, sometimes bringing to bed—this creates anxiety about whether help is coming.

Late-night feeding: Food right before bed means digestion competing with sleep, plus earlier potty needs.

Making nighttime potty breaks exciting: Lights on, talking, playing—this teaches the puppy that night waking leads to good times. Keep it boring.

Expecting too much, too soon: Sleeping through the night is a developmental milestone, not a training achievement. It comes with time and maturity.

Part I: The Arrival

Chapter 2 Checklist:

- ☐ Set up sleeping area next to your bed for first nights
- ☐ Obtain comfort toolkit: heartbeat toy, scent item, warm water bottle
- ☐ Establish consistent wake, meal, and bedtime
- ☐ Plan enforced nap schedule (1 hour awake, 2 hours sleep)
- ☐ Set alarm for middle-of-night potty break (first few weeks)
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

- ☐ Address climate considerations (cooling options for summer)
- ☐ Prepare calm, boring response protocol for night crying
- ☐ Communicate expectations with family members

The first night sets the tone for months of sleep—yours and your puppy's. Approach it with empathy, preparation, and realistic expectations. The goal isn't a perfectly quiet night; it's building the trust and routine that will lead to many peaceful nights ahead. Your puppy's brain is developing at an astonishing rate. The security they feel in these early nights—or the anxiety they develop—will shape their emotional regulation for years. The exhaustion is temporary. The foundation is permanent.



CHAPTER III: The Immunity Paradox

Nature vs. Needles

"The question is not whether to vaccinate—it is how to vaccinate wisely, protecting against real threats without overwhelming a developing immune system."

The Vaccination Conversation We're Not Having

Let me be clear from the outset: **vaccines save lives**. Diseases like distemper and parvovirus, which once decimated dog populations, are now largely controlled because of vaccination. This chapter is not an argument against vaccination.

It is, however, an argument for **informed, individualized, science-based** vaccination rather than the one-size-fits-all, maximum-intervention approach that dominates Indian veterinary practice. Because somewhere between "vaccinate nothing" and "vaccinate everything, every year, just to be safe," lies a rational middle ground that protects your puppy without unnecessarily burdening their developing immune system.

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) updated their vaccination guidelines in 2024, and what they recommend may surprise you—and contradict what your local vet is telling you.

Understanding Immunity: How Vaccines Actually Work

To make informed decisions, you need to understand the basics of how immunity develops.

Maternal Antibodies: The First Shield

Puppies are born with minimal immune protection of their own. Instead, they receive **maternal antibodies** through colostrum (first milk) in the hours after birth. These antibodies circulate in the puppy's blood, providing passive protection against diseases the mother was immune to.

This is crucial to understand: maternal antibodies don't just protect puppies—they also **interfere with vaccination**. When a vaccine is administered, the maternal antibodies can neutralize the vaccine antigens before the puppy's own immune system has a chance to respond.

The level of maternal antibodies varies significantly between puppies—even within the same litter—and declines over time at different rates. This creates the "immunity gap": a period when maternal antibodies are too low to protect but high enough to interfere with vaccination.

Active Immunity: Building Lasting Protection

When a vaccine successfully stimulates the immune system, the puppy develops **active immunity**—their own antibodies and memory cells that provide long-term protection. This is the goal of vaccination.

The duration of this immunity varies by disease and by individual. Here's what Dr. Ronald Schultz's groundbreaking research at the University of Wisconsin has shown:

- ☐ **Canine Distemper Virus (CDV):** Memory persists for at least 7-9 years; likely lifetime
- ☐ **Canine Parvovirus (CPV):** Memory persists for at least 7-9 years; likely lifetime

- ☐ **Canine Adenovirus (CAV):** Memory persists for at least 7-9 years; likely lifetime
- ☐ **Rabies:** Memory persists for at least 3-7 years

Yes, you read that correctly. The core vaccines provide protection measured in **years to lifetime**—not the 12 months that annual vaccination protocols imply.

Core vs. Non-Core: The WSAVA Classification

The WSAVA divides vaccines into two categories based on global disease distribution and severity:

Core Vaccines (Recommended for ALL Dogs)

Vaccine	Why It's Core
Distemper (CDV)	Highly contagious, often fatal. Affects nervous system. No cure exists.
Parvovirus (CPV)	Extremely contagious, high mortality in puppies. Survives in environment for years.
Adenovirus (CAV)	Causes infectious hepatitis. CAV-2 vaccine cross-protects against CAV-1.
Rabies	100% fatal. Zoonotic (transmits to humans). Legally required in most regions.

Non-Core Vaccines (Based on Risk Assessment)

Vaccine	Consider If...	Indian Context
Leptospirosis	Exposure to stagnant water, rats, wildlife	HIGH relevance—monsoon flooding, urban rats
Kennel Cough (Bordetella)	Boarding, dog parks, grooming salons	Moderate—assess lifestyle
Canine Influenza	High-density dog environments	LOW relevance—not endemic in India
Lyme Disease	Tick-endemic areas	VARIABLES—discuss with local vet

The Desi Carnivore Vaccination Protocol

Based on WSAVA 2024 guidelines, adapted for Indian conditions:

The Puppy Series (8-16 Weeks)

The goal is to ensure at least one vaccine dose is given after maternal antibody interference has waned—typically by 16 weeks of age.

WSAVA Recommended Schedule:

- ☐ **8-9 weeks:** First DAP (Distemper-Adenovirus-Parvovirus)
- ☐ **12 weeks:** Second DAP
- ☐ **16 weeks or older:** Final DAP (the most important dose)
- ☐ **12-16 weeks:** Rabies (timing may vary by local law)

The **final dose at 16 weeks or older is critical**. Puppies who receive their last vaccine at 12-14 weeks may not be fully protected, as maternal antibodies can persist in some individuals until 16 weeks.

Indian Context Considerations

Leptospirosis: Given India's monsoon climate and urban rat populations, leptospirosis vaccination is strongly recommended for most Indian dogs. However, note that lepto vaccines provide shorter duration of immunity (approximately 12 months) and protect only against the serovars included in the vaccine—not all strains.

Rabies Timing: India has one of the highest rabies burdens globally. While WSAVA recommends rabies at 12-16 weeks, some Indian vets administer earlier due to high environmental risk. Discuss local prevalence with your veterinarian.

Corona Virus Vaccine: Still commonly sold in India despite being classified as "not recommended" by WSAVA. Canine coronavirus causes mild, self-limiting diarrhea and is not the same as COVID-19. Save your money.

Adult Boosters: The Over-Vaccination Question

Here's where Indian veterinary practice often diverges from international guidelines.

What You're Often Told:

"Annual boosters for everything—DHPPiL, rabies, kennel cough, corona. Every year, without fail, or your dog isn't protected."

What WSAVA Actually Recommends:

- ☐ **Core vaccines (DAP):** Revaccinate at 6 months or 12 months after puppy series, then no more frequently than every 3 years
- ☐ **Rabies:** Per local regulations; scientifically, every 3 years is sufficient
- ☐ **Non-core vaccines:** Annually IF risk factors persist; discontinue if lifestyle changes

The science is clear: once a dog has responded to core vaccines (as confirmed by antibody presence), they have immunological memory that persists for **years—not months**. Annual core vaccination is not providing additional protection; it's providing additional risk without benefit.

Vaccine Reactions: Understanding the Risks

Vaccines are not risk-free. Understanding potential adverse reactions helps you make informed decisions and recognize problems early.

Common, Mild Reactions (resolve within 24-48 hours):

- ☐ Local swelling at injection site
- ☐ Mild lethargy or reduced appetite
- Slight fever
- ☐ Mild soreness

Serious Reactions (seek immediate veterinary care):

- ☐ **Anaphylaxis:** Facial swelling, difficulty breathing, collapse (rare but life-threatening)
- ☐ **Immune-mediated reactions:** Hemolytic anemia, thrombocytopenia (more common with certain vaccines)
- ☐ **Injection site sarcomas:** Rare in dogs, more common in cats
- ☐ **Autoimmune disease triggering:** In genetically predisposed individuals

The risk of serious adverse reactions increases with the number of vaccines given simultaneously and with frequent revaccination. This is one reason to avoid the "everything in one visit" approach some clinics practice.

Titer Testing: The Rational Alternative

Instead of automatically revaccinating, you can **measure existing immunity** through titer testing—a blood test that detects antibody levels against specific diseases.

How It Works: A small blood sample is tested for antibodies against distemper, parvovirus, and adenovirus. If protective titers are present, the dog is immune—no booster needed. If titers are absent or low, vaccination is indicated.

The WSAVA Position:

"Antibody testing (serology) can be used instead of automatic revaccination to determine whether a booster is necessary." WSAVA explicitly endorses titer testing as a scientifically valid alternative to routine revaccination.

In-Clinic Testing:

Simple titer test kits (like VacciCheck) are now available in India and can be run in-clinic with results in 21 minutes. The cost is comparable to a combination vaccine, but provides information rather than automatic intervention.

When Titer Testing Makes Sense:

- ☐ Before annual "boosters" to verify need
- ☐ After the puppy series to confirm adequate response
- ☐ For dogs with previous vaccine reactions
- ☐ For senior dogs or those with chronic illness

For breeds predisposed to autoimmune conditions

The Hygiene Hypothesis and Immune Development

Beyond vaccination, there's a broader question about how we're raising puppies' immune systems. The **Hygiene Hypothesis**—well-established in human medicine—is increasingly relevant to canine health.

The theory: immune systems that encounter diverse microbial challenges during development learn to respond appropriately. Immune systems raised in overly sterile environments—protected from all exposure—may become hyperreactive, leading to allergies, autoimmune conditions, and inflammatory diseases.

Research from the University of Helsinki's DogRisk group has found that puppies raised in urban apartments with minimal outdoor exposure have higher rates of allergic skin disease than those raised with access to diverse natural environments. Puppies who play in dirt, encounter various microbes, and aren't constantly bathed in antibacterial products develop more resilient immune systems.

Practical implications:

- ☐ Don't over-sanitize your puppy's environment
 - ☐ Allow exposure to natural outdoor environments (after appropriate vaccination)
 - ☐ Avoid unnecessary antibiotics that disrupt gut microbiome diversity
 - ☐ Consider probiotic supplementation to support microbial diversity
- Feed a varied diet to expose the gut to diverse food antigens

The Demodex Connection: When Immunity Fails

Demodex mites live on virtually all dogs—they're part of the normal skin fauna. In healthy dogs with competent immune systems, these mites remain in check, causing no problems. Demodicosis—clinical disease from Demodex overgrowth—occurs when the immune system fails to control the population.

This is why my own experience with Demodex, mentioned in the Introduction, was so pivotal. The mites weren't the problem—they were the symptom of an immune system compromised by processed food, over-vaccination, and chemical overload.

Puppies who develop generalized demodicosis often have underlying immune dysfunction. While treatment targets the mites, true resolution requires addressing immune health through nutrition, reducing toxic burden, and appropriate (not excessive) vaccination.

Case Study: The Over-Vaccinated Puppy

Rocky, a 6-month-old Labrador in Mumbai, had received: 3 DHPPiL vaccines, 2 rabies vaccines, 2 kennel cough vaccines, and a corona vaccine—all before 6 months of age. His owner was told this was "extra protection." At 8 months, Rocky developed severe allergic skin disease. He was scratching constantly, losing fur, and developing secondary infections. Multiple rounds of steroids and antibiotics provided temporary relief but the condition always returned. Titer testing showed extremely high antibody levels for all core diseases—evidence of an overstimulated immune system. The protocol shift: no more core vaccines (titers demonstrated robust immunity), dietary overhaul to reduce inflammatory inputs, gut support to address microbiome disruption from antibiotics. Eighteen months later, Rocky's skin is healthy, requiring no medications. His immune system, given space to recalibrate, found balance.

Having the Conversation with Your Vet

Many Indian vets are not yet aligned with WSAVA guidelines. Some genuinely believe annual vaccination is necessary; others have financial incentives tied to vaccine sales. Here's how to navigate the conversation:

Questions to Ask:

1. "What is the duration of immunity for this vaccine according to manufacturer data?"
2. "Are you familiar with the WSAVA vaccination guidelines?"
3. "Can we do titer testing before giving boosters?"
4. "Which of these vaccines are core vs. non-core for my dog's specific risk profile?"
5. "What are the potential adverse reactions I should watch for?"

A vet who dismisses these questions or becomes defensive may not be the right partner for evidence-based care. A vet who engages thoughtfully—even if they ultimately disagree on some points—is one who respects your role as an informed advocate for your dog.

Chapter 3 Checklist

- Complete puppy vaccination series with final dose at 16+ weeks
- Prioritize core vaccines (DAP + Rabies) over non-core
- Discuss leptospirosis risk based on local conditions
- Decline corona virus vaccine (not recommended by WSAVA)
- Consider titer testing before automatic boosters
- Avoid multiple vaccines in single visit when possible
- Monitor for adverse reactions for 24-48 hours post-vaccination
- Maintain vaccination records with dates and product names

Vaccination is one of veterinary medicine's greatest achievements but like any medical intervention, it carries both benefits and risks. The Desi Carnivore approach

isn't anti-vaccine—it's anti-autopilot. It asks us to think critically about what our individual dog actually needs, based on their age, health status, lifestyle, and local disease risks.

The immune system is not a wall to be constantly reinforced with more bricks. It's a complex, adaptive system that—when properly supported through nutrition, appropriate immune challenges, and judicious medical intervention—is remarkably capable of protecting your dog throughout their life.

Trust the science. Question the routine. Advocate for your puppy.



* * *

CHAPTER IV: Fueling the Growth Spurt

Ancestral Nutrition for the Modern Puppy

“Dogs evolved to digest meat, not carbs. Their short gut, highly acidic stomach, and limited starch-digesting enzymes can't efficiently process the 40-60% carbohydrate content in most commercial kibble. This mismatch gradually undermines cellular health, immune function, and tissue integrity.”

The Growth Imperative: Why Puppy Nutrition Is Different

In the first six months of life, your puppy will increase their birth weight by **20-40 times**. They will build a skeletal system, develop organ function, wire a nervous system, and establish the gut microbiome that will influence their health for life. This isn't maintenance—it's construction on an epic scale.

The building materials you provide during this window determine the quality of the structure. Feed cheap materials, get a structure prone to failure. Feed species-appropriate, nutrient-dense materials, get a body built for resilience.

This chapter will challenge nearly everything mainstream pet food marketing has told you. But the science—from peer-reviewed research to clinical observations to the lived experience of thousands of Desi Carnivore families—is clear: **what puppies eat matters profoundly**, and what they've been eating in the kibble era is failing them.

The Problem with Processed: Understanding Kibble's Limitations

Commercial kibble was invented in 1956—a blink of an eye in the 15,000-year history of dogs living alongside humans. Before kibble, dogs ate what humans ate: scraps, bones, organs, and whatever they could scavenge. They thrived.

Kibble offered convenience, shelf stability, and predictability. It also introduced problems that are only now becoming clear through rigorous research.

The Heat Processing Problem

Kibble is extruded at temperatures exceeding 150°C under high pressure. This process:

- ❑ **Denatures proteins:** Changes their molecular structure, potentially reducing bioavailability and creating novel protein structures the immune system may react to
- ❑ **Destroys heat-sensitive nutrients:** Vitamins, enzymes, and beneficial compounds are lost, requiring synthetic supplementation
- ❑ **Creates Advanced Glycation End-products (AGEs):** The Maillard reaction that browns kibble produces compounds linked to inflammation, oxidative stress, and accelerated aging
- ❑ **Reduces digestibility:** Studies show raw food achieves ~90% digestibility versus ~87% for kibble—a difference that compounds over a lifetime

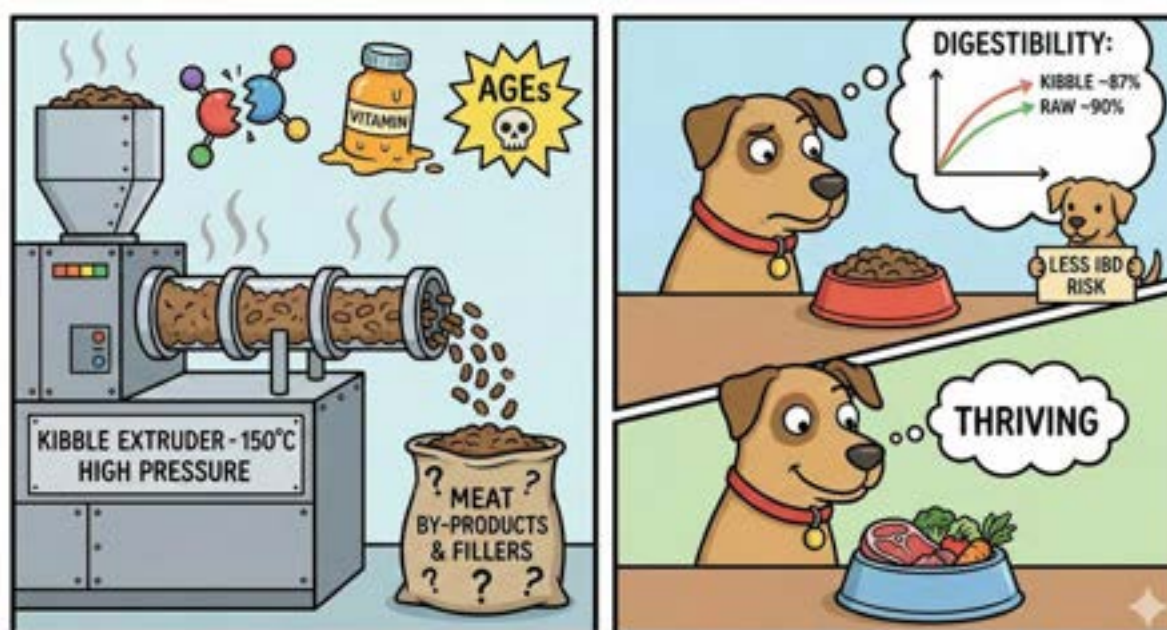
Dr. Anna Hielm-Björkman's DogRisk research at the University of Helsinki found that puppies fed non-processed, meat-based diets were **61-85% less likely** to develop inflammatory bowel disease as adults. The processing itself appears to be a significant factor in disease development.

The Ingredient Quality Problem

Read the ingredient list on most commercial puppy foods. You'll find:

- ☐ **"Meat by-products":** The parts of animals humans won't eat—not inherently bad, but quality varies wildly
- ☐ **Corn, wheat, soy:** Cheap fillers that dogs have no evolutionary history of eating and that contribute to inflammatory responses
- ☐ **"Animal fat":** Rendered fat from unspecified sources, often preserved with synthetic antioxidants
- ☐ **Synthetic vitamin/mineral packs:** Added because the processing destroyed the natural nutrients

The industry markets "complete and balanced" as if this guarantees optimal health. It guarantees only that minimum standards—often decades old—are met. It says nothing about thriving.



The Ancestral Model: What Dogs Are Designed to Eat

Dogs are facultative carnivores—they can survive on varied diets, but they're optimized for meat-based nutrition. Their physiology tells the story:

- ☐ **Teeth:** Designed for tearing and crushing, not grinding plant material
- ☐ **Digestive tract:** Short and acidic, optimized for rapid digestion of animal protein
- ☐ **Salivary amylase:** Minimal, indicating limited evolutionary adaptation to starch digestion

- ☐ **Nutrient requirements:** High protein, moderate fat, minimal carbohydrate need
- ☐ **Prey model:** Wild canids eat muscle meat, organs, bones, and gut contents—a complete nutritional package

The ancestral diet wasn't "raw chicken and rice." It was whole prey—providing muscle protein, organ nutrition (nature's multivitamin), bone calcium, connective tissue collagen, and the predigested plant matter from herbivore stomachs. This is the template we're trying to approximate.

The Desi Carnivore Puppy Nutrition Framework

I'm not going to tell you that every puppy must eat fresh food or that kibble is poison. What I am going to tell you is that **fresh, species-appropriate food produces better outcomes** than processed alternatives—and that there's a practical spectrum of options for Indian dog parents.

The Feeding Spectrum

Level 1 - Foundation (Better than Status Quo):

High-quality kibble + fresh food toppers (10-25% of diet). This is the minimum I recommend. The fresh additions—eggs, plain curd, cooked meat, vegetables—provide enzymes, moisture, and nutrients that kibble lacks.

Level 2 - Intermediate (Significant Improvement):

50/50 split between commercial food and home-prepared fresh food. The fresh portion follows ancestral principles: primarily animal protein with appropriate additions. This provides substantial benefits while managing preparation time.

Level 3 - Optimal (Maximum Benefit):

Fully home-prepared meals following gently cooked protocols. This requires more knowledge and effort but produces the best health outcomes in my clinical experience and aligns with the research literature.

Practical Guidelines for Puppy Feeding

Feeding Frequency by Age

Age	Meals/Day	Notes
8-12 weeks	4 meals	Small stomachs, high metabolism
3-4 months	3-4 meals	Transition to 3 by 4 months
4-6 months	3 meals	Morning, noon, evening

6-12 months	2-3 meals	Transition to 2 by 12 months
Adult (1+ years)	2 meals	Morning and evening

How Much to Feed

Feeding amounts depend on the food type, the individual puppy's metabolism, activity level, and breed. Package guidelines are starting points, not gospel.

For fresh/raw diets:

- ☐ 8-16 weeks: 8-10% of current body weight daily
- ☐ 4-6 months: 6-8% of current body weight daily
- ☐ 6-12 months: 4-6% of current body weight daily
- ☐ Adult: 2-3% of ideal body weight daily

The body condition test: You should be able to feel ribs with light pressure but not see them prominently. There should be a visible waist when viewed from above. Puppies should be lean—not skinny, not chunky. Adjust portions based on what you see and feel, not just what the calculator says.

Building a Balanced Fresh Meal

If you're preparing fresh food, here's the basic framework:

Component	Percentage	Indian Options
Muscle Meat	70-80%	Chicken, mutton, fish, eggs
Organ Meat	10-15%	Liver, kidney, heart, gizzards
Dehydrated Bones	10-15%	Chicken feet, necks, mutton trotter etc.
Vegetables / Supplements	5-10%	Pumpkin(best), spinach (love), carrots (Don't like much), Hemp seeds (Love this one!), Hemp oil, Baobab fruit (My Superfood fav)

Essential additions:

- ☐ **Omega-3 source:** Sardines, or hemp seed oil, hemp seeds for anti-inflammatory balance
- ☐ **Calcium:** If not feeding dehydrated bones, supplement with eggshell powder or bone meal(not my fav).
- ☐ **Vitamin E:** Additions of Hemp oil and seeds will take care of this!

Indian Superfoods for Puppies

India's culinary tradition offers ingredients that are genuinely beneficial for dogs—not trendy marketing claims, but foods with real nutritional value.

Turmeric (Haldi)

The curcumin in turmeric has documented anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. For puppies, small amounts (¼ tsp per 10kg body weight) mixed with a fat source (ghee works perfectly) and a pinch of black pepper (increases absorption by 2000%) can support joint development and gut health.

Ghee

Clarified butter is a traditional Indian fat source that dogs tolerate well—even many who react to regular dairy. It contains butyric acid (gut-supportive), fat-soluble vitamins, and provides calories for growing puppies. Start with ½ tsp per meal and adjust based on stool quality.

Curd (Dahi)

Plain, unsweetened curd provides probiotics that support gut microbiome development. The fermentation process breaks down much of the lactose, making it more digestible than milk. A few tablespoons daily can help establish healthy gut flora—critical during the puppy's microbiome formation period.

Moringa

Moringa leaves (fresh or powdered) are nutrient-dense, providing protein, vitamins, and minerals. A pinch of powder or a few fresh leaves added to meals provides nutritional insurance without synthetic supplements.

Foods to Avoid

Some foods are dangerous for dogs. Ensure everyone in the household knows these:

Toxic/Dangerous:

- ☐ **Grapes and raisins:** Can cause acute kidney failure
- ☐ **Onions and garlic (large amounts):** Damage red blood cells
- ☐ **Chocolate:** Theobromine toxicity, especially dark chocolate
- ☐ **Xylitol:** Artificial sweetener causes hypoglycemia and liver failure
- ☐ **Macadamia nuts:** Cause weakness, vomiting, tremors
- ☐ **Cooked bones:** Splinter and can cause internal damage

Best Avoided:

- ☐ **Milk:** Many dogs are lactose intolerant
- ☐ **Roti/chapati:** Low nutritional value, potential gluten sensitivity
- ☐ **Spicy foods:** Can cause digestive upset
- ☐ **Excessive salt:** Human food often too salty

Transitioning to Fresh Food

If your puppy is currently eating kibble, don't switch overnight. The gut microbiome needs time to adjust.

Week 1: 75% old food, 25% new food

Week 2: 50% old food, 50% new food

Week 3: 25% old food, 75% new food

Week 4: 100% new food

Some digestive upset (softer stools, mild gas) is normal during transition. Persistent diarrhea, vomiting, or refusal to eat warrants slowing down or veterinary consultation.

Sample Meal Plans

For a 10kg, 4-month-old puppy (approximately 600-800g food daily, split into 3 meals):

Breakfast:

- ☐ 150g chicken mince cooked with a dehydrated bone
 - 1 egg
 - Splash of curd
- ☐ ½ tsp hemp oil

Lunch:

- ☐ 100g fish (sardines or mackerel)
- ☐ 50g steamed pumpkin
- ☐ 1 tsp Hemp powder/seeds

Dinner:

- ☐ 120g mutton or goat
 - 30g chicken liver
- ☐ Small handful of wilted spinach
- ☐ Pinch of turmeric with pepper

Recreational chew (2-3 times weekly): Chicken feet, mutton trotter, or other appropriate dehydrated bone for dental health and mental stimulation.

Budget Considerations

"Fresh food is too expensive" is a common objection. Let's examine reality:

- ☐ **Chicken mince (with bone):** ₹350-500/kg
- ☐ **Chicken liver/gizzards:** ₹180-200/kg
- ☐ **Eggs:** ₹10-15 each
- ☐ **Sardines/mackerel:** ₹250-350/kg
- ☐ **Premium puppy kibble:** ₹400-800/kg

For many families, fresh feeding is **comparable** than premium kibble—and significantly healthier. The real cost difference comes in veterinary bills years later. Prevention through nutrition is almost always cheaper than treatment of chronic disease.

Chapter 4 Checklist

- Establish feeding schedule appropriate to puppy's age
- Calculate daily food quantity based on body weight
- If using kibble, add fresh food toppers (minimum 10-25%)
- Include organ meats weekly (liver, kidney, heart)
- Add omega-3 source (hemp oil or whole fish)
- Incorporate Indian superfoods (turmeric, ghee, curd, hemp)
- Remove all toxic foods from puppy's reach
- Monitor body condition weekly and adjust portions
- Transition gradually if changing diet types

Nutrition during the puppy phase isn't just about growth—it's about programming. The foods your puppy eats now influence their gut microbiome composition, their immune system development, their metabolic patterns, and their relationship with food for life.

You have a window of 6-12 months to build the nutritional foundation. The convenience of kibble comes at a cost that may not be visible until years later, when chronic disease emerges from a body that was never given the building blocks it needed.

Choose wisely. Feed intentionally. Your puppy's future self will thank you.



End of Part I

THE ARRIVAL

You have now established the foundation: a chemical-free environment, healthy sleep patterns, rational vaccination, and species-appropriate nutrition. Your puppy has the building blocks for a resilient body and mind.

Next comes the teenage phase—when everything you've built will be tested by hormones, energy, and the relentless need to chew.

PART II

THE REBEL TEENAGER

Hormones & Harmony

Focus: 6 Months to 1.5 Years

CHAPTER V: The T-Rex Phase

Surviving Adolescent Energy

"That adorable ball of fluff who once gazed at you adoringly hasn't vanished—they've simply entered canine adolescence. They're navigating a biological storm of hormones while their brain rewires itself in real-time."

What's Actually Happening: The Adolescent Brain

Between 6 and 18 months, your dog undergoes the most significant neurological and hormonal changes of their post-puppyhood life. Understanding this biology is essential to surviving it—and to not ruining your dog in the process with punitive responses to development normal behavior.

The Prefrontal Cortex Problem

The prefrontal cortex—responsible for impulse control, decision-making, and emotional regulation—is the last part of the brain to mature. In dogs, this maturation continues until approximately 2-3 years of age, depending on breed.

What does this mean practically? Your adolescent dog **literally cannot** exercise the same impulse control as an adult dog. The hardware for that control is still under construction. When they see a squirrel and forget every recall command they've ever learned, it's not defiance—it's neurodevelopmental reality.

Research published in *Biology Letters* (2020) confirmed that adolescent dogs show reduced obedience to familiar caregivers compared to both younger puppies and adult dogs—a pattern strikingly similar to human teenage behavior. The study also found that dogs who experienced more conflict with their caregivers during adolescence developed more insecure attachment styles.

The Hormonal Tsunami

Sexual maturity brings a flood of hormones that affect behavior profoundly:

In intact males:

- ☐ Testosterone surges, peaking around 10-12 months
- ☐ Increased territorial marking (leg lifting becomes constant)
- ☐ Roaming instincts intensify
- ☐ Potential for same-sex aggression increases
- ☐ Mounting behavior (not always sexual—often related to arousal/excitement)

In intact females:

- ☐ First heat cycle typically occurs between 6-12 months (smaller breeds earlier)
- ☐ Behavioral changes during heat: restlessness, increased urination, attraction to males
- ☐ Some females become more reactive or irritable during hormonal fluctuations
- ☐ False pregnancy can occur 4-9 weeks after heat

The Second Fear Period

Many dogs experience a "second fear period" between 6-14 months—a window when previously confident dogs suddenly become wary of things that never bothered them before. The auto-rickshaw they've seen daily might suddenly be terrifying. A familiar person in a hat becomes a threat.

This isn't regression. It's an evolutionary adaptation. In the wild, adolescence is when young canines begin venturing farther from the den. A heightened fear response to novel stimuli keeps them alive during this vulnerable exploration phase.

How to handle fear periods:

- ☐ **Don't force exposure:** Flooding (forcing interaction with feared stimuli) backfires badly during this sensitive window
- ☐ **Don't coddle excessively:** Excessive soothing can reinforce that there IS something to fear
- ☐ **Do model calm behavior:** Your response teaches them how to respond
- ☐ **Do create positive associations:** Treats + scary thing = scary thing becomes less scary
- ☐ **Do give time:** Fear periods typically last 2-3 weeks; patience is your best tool

The Energy Crisis: Why Your Dog is Destroying Everything

Adolescent dogs have **adult-sized energy reserves** with **puppy-level self-control**. This mismatch is responsible for most of the destructive behavior that makes owners question their life choices.

The solution isn't just "more exercise"—though exercise helps. It's understanding the **type** of stimulation your adolescent needs.

The Three Types of Energy Outlets

1. Physical Exercise

Running, walking, swimming, fetch. This addresses the most obvious need—burning calories and muscle fatigue. But physical exercise alone can create an "athlete" dog who needs more and more exercise to feel tired.

2. Mental Stimulation

Puzzle toys, training sessions, scent work, problem-solving games. Mental work is **far more tiring** than physical work. Twenty minutes of challenging mental exercise can be equivalent to an hour of walking.

3. Predatory Outlet

This is the one most owners miss. Dogs are predators. They have hardwired behavioral sequences: search → stalk → chase → grab-bite → kill-bite → dissect → consume. When these drives aren't satisfied through appropriate outlets, they emerge inappropriately—chasing cyclists, shredding cushions, obsessive ball fixation.

Provide predatory outlets through: flirt poles (controlled chasing), tug games (grab-bite), food puzzles that require "hunting," shredding appropriate items (cardboard boxes stuffed with treats), and dehydrated chews that satisfy the dissect/consume drive.

Managing the Chaos: A Daily Structure

Adolescent dogs **need structure** more than any other life stage. A predictable routine helps their developing brains regulate arousal and reduces anxiety-driven behavior.

Sample Adolescent Dog Daily Schedule

Time	Activity
6:30 AM 7:30	Wake, potty, vigorous physical exercise (30-45 min)
AM 8:00 AM	Breakfast in puzzle feeder (mental work)
8:30 AM - 12 PM	Training session (10-15 min) while you get ready
12:00 PM 12:30 -	Rest period (crate or designated area) with long-lasting chew
5 PM 5:00 PM	Midday potty break, short sniff walk or play session
6:00 PM 7:00 -	Rest period with enrichment toy
9:00 PM 9:30	Evening exercise—decompression walk (sniffing priority)
PM	Dinner + Training or play session
	Calm family time, settle practice
	Final potty, bedtime

The Chewing Imperative

Adolescent dogs chew. They chew a lot. They chew furniture, shoes, cables, walls, themselves, and anything else within reach. This isn't misbehavior—it's biological necessity.

Why adolescents chew:

- ☐ **Teething completion:** Adult teeth are fully in by 6-7 months, but gum discomfort can persist
- ☐ **Jaw muscle development:** Chewing builds the muscles needed for adult bite strength
- ☐ **Stress relief:** Chewing releases endorphins; it's self-soothing behavior
- ☐ **Exploration:** Dogs investigate the world through their mouths
- ☐ **Predatory satisfaction:** Dissecting prey (or a shoe that represents prey) fulfills instinct

The solution isn't stopping chewing—it's directing it:

- ☐ Provide **appropriate chews daily:** Dehydrated chicken feet, mutton feet, whole quail, bully sticks
- ☐ Rotate options to maintain interest
- ☐ Manage the environment: put shoes away, use cord covers, crate when unsupervised

When they chew something inappropriate, interrupt and redirect to an appropriate option

Training During Adolescence: Adjusting Expectations

Training doesn't stop at 6 months—it intensifies. But you need to adjust your approach to match the adolescent brain.

What to expect:

- ☐ **Recall regression:** A dog who came reliably at 4 months may "forget" how to come when called
- ☐ **Selective hearing:** They hear you; they're choosing to prioritize something else
- ☐ **Testing boundaries:** Rules that were accepted may suddenly be challenged
- ☐ **Shorter attention spans:** In distracting environments, focus evaporates

Training adjustments:

- ☐ **Increase reward value:** Use high-value treats (chicken, cheese, liver)
- ☐ **Keep sessions short:** 5-10 minutes multiple times daily beats one long session
- ☐ **Train in various contexts:** Skills learned at home need to be generalized to other environments
- ☐ **Use management:** Long lines for recall practice, baby gates to prevent rehearsal of unwanted behavior
- ☐ **Be patient:** This phase passes. The training you do now builds the adult dog.

The Spay/Neuter Question: Timing Matters

The automatic "6-month spay/neuter" recommendation is being questioned by current research. While preventing unwanted litters is important, early gonadectomy has documented health consequences.

What the research shows:

- ☐ **Joint disease:** Studies show increased rates of cruciate ligament tears and hip dysplasia in dogs neutered before skeletal maturity
- ☐ **Cancer:** Some cancers (osteosarcoma, hemangiosarcoma) show increased incidence with early neutering
- ☐ **Behavioral impact:** Early neutering may increase fear and anxiety in some individuals
- ☐ **Breed variation:** Effects vary significantly by breed and size

Current thinking:

- ☐ Wait until skeletal maturity when possible (12-24 months depending on breed size)
- ☐ For large/giant breeds, consider waiting until 18-24 months
- ☐ For females, allowing one or two heat cycles before spaying may be protective
- ☐ Weigh individual factors: Can you prevent unwanted pregnancy? Are there behavioral issues that sterilization might address?

This is a nuanced decision that should involve discussion with a veterinarian who is current on the research—not just following a standard protocol. My dogs are intact.

Case Study: The Destructive Beagle

Max, a 9-month-old Beagle in Delhi, was destroying his family's home. Shoes, furniture, cushions, even baseboards weren't safe. The family had tried everything: bitter apple spray, corrections, crating for punishment. Nothing worked. Assessment revealed: Max was getting two short walks daily and no other stimulation. His food came in a bowl, eaten in 30 seconds. He spent most of the day alone with zero appropriate outlets for his breed-specific drives—Beagles are scent hounds bred to work all day. The intervention: Morning runs before the family left for work. All meals fed through puzzle toys and snuffle mats. A midday dog walker visit. Daily scent games (hiding treats around the house). Two dehydrated chews daily. Within three weeks, the destruction stopped—not because Max changed, but because his needs were finally being met.

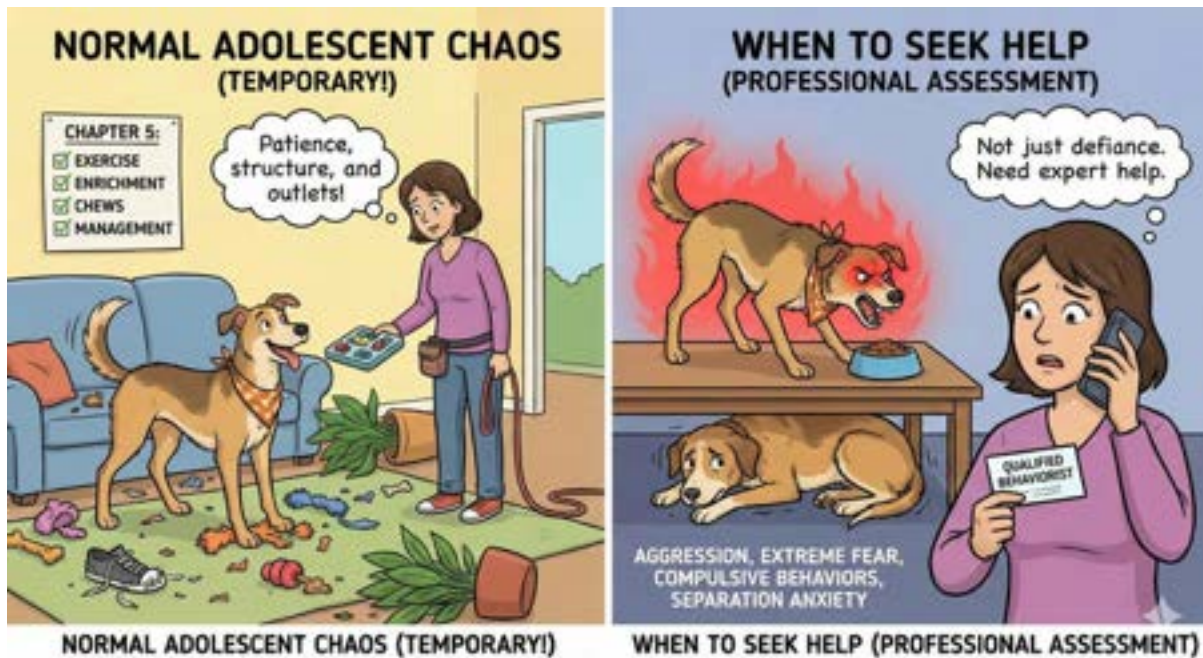
When to Worry: Normal vs. Problem Behavior

Most adolescent chaos is developmentally normal but some behaviours warrant professional assessment:

Seek help if you see:

- ☐ **Aggression escalating beyond normal adolescent reactivity:** Bites breaking skin, unprovoked attacks, resource guarding that's severe
- ☐ **Extreme fear that doesn't improve:** Hiding, trembling, inability to function in normal environments
- ☐ **Compulsive behaviors:** Tail chasing, shadow chasing, excessive licking that can't be interrupted
- ☐ **Separation anxiety:** Destruction, vocalization, or house soiling only when alone
- ☐ **Sudden behavioral changes:** Could indicate underlying medical issues

A qualified behaviorist (not just a trainer) can help distinguish normal adolescent struggles from genuine behavior pathology requiring intervention.



Chapter 5 Checklist

- Establish daily structure with exercise, training, rest, and enrichment
- Provide both physical AND mental stimulation daily
- Offer appropriate chews daily to satisfy chewing needs
- Use puzzle feeders instead of food bowls
- Manage the environment to prevent destructive behavior rehearsal
- Adjust training approach: higher value rewards, shorter sessions
- Use management tools (long lines, baby gates) during training regression
- Research spay/neuter timing appropriate to breed and individual
- Recognize fear periods and respond appropriately
- Maintain patience—this phase is temporary

The adolescent phase is when most dogs end up in shelters.

Owners, unprepared for the developmental reality, interpret normal behavior as defiance, aggression, or incorrigibility. They give up.

Understanding what's happening in your dog's brain during this phase is protective—for your relationship and for their future.

The challenging dog in front of you is becoming the adult dog you'll have for the next decade. How you respond to their struggles shapes who they become.

Be patient. Be consistent. Provide outlets. Manage the environment. Train with compassion. This too shall pass—and what emerges on the other side is worth the temporary chaos.

Surviving the Teenage Dog Phase



CHAPTER VI: Socialization in Urban India

Navigating Street Dogs, Traffic, and Chaos

"Socialization isn't about meeting as many dogs as possible. It's about teaching your dog that the world—in all its chaotic Indian glory—is safe to navigate."

The Socialization Myth: Quality Over Quantity

"Socialize your puppy!" is advice every new dog parent receives but what does it actually mean? The common interpretation—taking your puppy to dog parks, arranging endless playdates, exposing them to as many dogs and people as possible—often creates more problems than it solves.

True socialization is about creating **positive associations** with the stimuli your dog will encounter throughout their life. It's not about quantity of exposures—it's about the **quality of those experiences**. A single traumatic encounter at a dog park can undo months of careful positive exposure.

In India, the socialization challenge is uniquely complex, your dog doesn't just need to accept other dogs—they need to navigate street dogs, cattle, auto-rickshaws,

vegetable vendors, honking traffic, construction noise, crowded markets, and the general sensory overload that defines Indian urban life.

The Critical Socialization Window

The primary socialization window—when puppies are most receptive to new experiences—closes around **12-14 weeks of age**. This creates tension with vaccination protocols, since puppies aren't fully protected until around 16 weeks.

The solution isn't keeping puppies isolated. Instead, use **controlled exposure** strategies:

- ☐ **Carry your puppy:** In arms or a carrier, expose them to sights and sounds without ground contact
- ☐ **Car rides:** Drive through different environments with windows down
- ☐ **Controlled dog interactions:** Playdates with known, vaccinated, friendly dogs only
- ☐ **Home visitors:** Invite friends of different ages and appearances
- ☐ **Sound exposure:** Play recordings of traffic, fireworks at low volume during positive experiences

The Indian Socialization Checklist

Your dog needs exposure to India-specific stimuli that Western guides never mention:

Sounds to Normalize:

- ☐ Auto-rickshaw horns and two-wheeler sounds
- ☐ Pressure cooker whistles
- ☐ Temple bells, azaan, and religious processions
- ☐ Construction noise and drilling
- ☐ Firecrackers (Diwali preparation—start months before)
- ☐ Street vendors calling out
- ☐ Thunderstorms and heavy monsoon rain

Sights and Experiences:

- ☐ Street cattle and cows (observe from safe distance)
- ☐ Bikes, motorcycles, and scooters
- ☐ People in varied dress—sarees, helmets, uniforms
- ☐ Crowds and busy markets
- ☐ Elevators and lifts
- ☐ Different floor surfaces—tiles, marble, grass, metal gratings
- ☐ Umbrellas opening suddenly

Navigating Street Dog Dynamics

India has an estimated 35-60 million street dogs. Your pet dog **will** encounter them, and how you handle these interactions shapes your dog's social development.

Understanding Street Dog Behavior

Street dogs (Indies) are remarkably well-socialized compared to many pet dogs. They live in complex social structures and have developed sophisticated communication skills. Most displays are territorial warnings, not actual aggression.

During street dog encounters:

1. **Stay calm:** Your energy transfers directly to your dog
2. **Keep moving:** Most displays end when you leave their territory
3. **Create distance:** Cross the street, change direction
4. **Don't allow nose-to-nose meetings:** Unknown dogs are health and behavioral risks
5. **Carry a deterrent:** An umbrella can create space when opened
6. **Know your routes:** Learn which areas have territorial packs

Teaching Your Dog to Disengage

The most valuable skill is teaching your dog to **disengage** from other dogs on cue—to look away from a trigger and focus on you instead.

Training 'Look at Me':

7. Start in a distraction-free environment
8. Say your cue ("Watch" or "Eyes")
9. Mark and reward the moment they make eye contact
10. Gradually add duration and distractions
11. Eventually practice near other dogs at distance

Traffic Training: The Life-Saving Skill

Indian traffic is notorious. Teaching your dog to navigate it safely is literally life and death.

The Curb Protocol: Every time you approach a road crossing, your dog should automatically stop and wait.

12. Approach every curb and stop yourself
13. Ask for "sit" or "wait" before crossing
14. Look both ways (modeling the behavior)
15. Release with a cue ("Let's go")
16. Reward after crossing—after hundreds of repetitions, it becomes automatic

Noise Phobia Prevention: Preparing for Diwali

Research shows **49-52% of dogs** exhibit significant fear responses to fireworks. In India, preparation is essential.

Systematic Sound Desensitization:

17. **Get quality recordings:** YouTube has hours of firework and thunderstorm sounds

18. **Start VERY quiet:** Barely audible—zero reaction from your dog
19. **Pair with positive experiences:** Play sounds during meals and treat training
20. **Increase volume incrementally:** Only when no fear response—this takes weeks
21. **If fear appears, go back:** You've moved too fast

When Fear Happens: The Correct Response

What NOT to do:

- ☐ **Force exposure:** Flooding worsens fear
- ☐ **Punish:** Corrections create more fear
- ☐ **Over-coddle:** Excessive soothing can reinforce fear

What TO do:

- ☐ **Increase distance:** Move away until your dog can cope
- ☐ **Model calm:** Your body language teaches them
- ☐ **Offer treats if they can eat:** Taking food means they're below panic threshold
- ☐ **Provide calm support:** Quiet presence, gentle touch if sought

Case Study: The Traffic-Reactive Indie

Ginger, an 8-month-old Indie adopted from the street in Bangalore, lunged and barked at every vehicle. Walks were battles. Assessment revealed her first months were spent dodging traffic—vehicles were genuine survival threats. Her behavior was fear-based, not aggression. The protocol: Start at 50 meters from a quiet road. Every passing vehicle = chicken/treat. Over 8 weeks, distance decreased. She learned "watch me" as an incompatible behavior. Three months later, Ginger walks on busy roads with mild interest but no reactivity. She now looks at her handler expectantly when cars pass.

Chapter 6 Checklist

- Create India-specific socialization exposure list
- Practice carrying puppy to new environments
- Teach "look at me" cue for disengagement
- Develop street dog encounter protocol
- Train automatic curb stops
- Begin sound desensitization with recordings
- Plan Diwali preparation months in advance
- Arrange structured playdates over dog parks

Socialization in India isn't about creating a dog who loves every dog and person. It's about creating a dog who can **navigate their environment with confidence**

and self-control—who sees the chaos of Indian streets as background noise in a life well-lived.



* * *

CHAPTER VII: Holistic Dermatology

Skin as the Mirror of Internal Health

"The skin is not just a surface—it's the body's largest organ, and every rash, itch, and hot spot is a message from inside."

The Skin as Symptom

When dogs develop skin problems, the typical response is topical: medicated shampoos, steroid creams, antifungal sprays. These address the **symptom**—the visible manifestation—while ignoring the **cause**.

The holistic perspective recognizes skin as the body's largest eliminatory organ.

When internal systems are overwhelmed—dysbiotic gut, overloaded liver, chronic inflammation—the skin becomes an outlet. Suppressing symptoms without addressing causes drives the problem deeper.

Indian Climate and Canine Skin

Monsoon Humidity

Humidity exceeding 90% creates perfect conditions for yeast and fungal overgrowth.

Malassezia yeast that lives harmlessly on all dog skin proliferates in humid conditions. Signs: greasy skin, dark pigmentation, intense itching, and distinctive yeasty odor.

Summer Heat

Temperatures exceeding 40°C cause heat rash, bacterial hot spots from trapped moisture, and sunburn in light-colored dogs.

Air Pollution

Cities like Delhi, with PM_{2.5} levels 10-20 times WHO safe limits, affect skin health. Particulate matter causes irritation and may be absorbed through compromised skin.

Common Skin Conditions

1. Yeast Infections (Malassezia)

Signs: Intense itching (ears, paws, armpits), greasy skin, musty smell, dark thickened skin.

Holistic approach:

- ☐ Address the gut—remove sugar and high-starch foods
- ☐ Add probiotics for competitive exclusion
- ☐ Topical support: ACV rinses (1:3), Baobab oil
- ☐ Keep dry—thorough drying after any water exposure

2. Hot Spots

Signs: Sudden red, moist, painful lesion; hair loss; oozing.

Holistic approach:

- ☐ Clip and clean with diluted chlorhexidine
- ☐ Keep dry and exposed to air
- ☐ Prevent licking with cone if needed
- ☐ Soothing applications: Baobab oil

3. Allergic Dermatitis

Food allergies: Most common culprits are proteins eaten repeatedly (chicken, beef, dairy, carrot or some other vegetable).

Environmental allergies: Pollen, dust mites, mold. Symptoms often seasonal.

Flea allergy: A single bite triggers intense itching. Hair loss at tail base.

Holistic approach:

- ☐ Strengthen gut barrier: bone broth, glutamine, probiotics
 - ☐ Reduce inflammatory load: fresh food, omega-3s (Hemp)
 - ☐ Identify and minimize triggers through elimination ☐
- Apply Baobab oil

The Gut-Skin Axis

The gut microbiome influences immune regulation, inflammation, nutrient absorption, and barrier integrity. Treating skin topically while feeding processed food is like mopping while the faucet runs.

Gut-Support Protocol:

1. Remove inflammatory foods: processed kibble, high-carb diets
2. Add fermented foods: plain curd, kefir
3. Include prebiotic fiber: pumpkin, sweet potato
4. Bone broth for gut lining repair
5. Quality multi-strain probiotic

Natural Topical Remedies

Remedy	Best For	Application
Coconut Oil	Dry skin, mild fungal	Thin layer on affected areas
Baobab Oil	Fungal, hot spots, eczema, dandruff, dry skin, cracked paws, cracked nose, itchy coat/skin, allergies	Thin layer on affected areas

Apple Cider Vinegar	Yeast, itchy skin	Dilute 1:3, never on wounds
Hemp Seed Oil	Dry skin, allergies	Topical and oral use

Bathing Guidelines

Frequency: Every 4-6 weeks for most dogs

Temperature: Lukewarm, not hot

Shampoo: pH-balanced for dogs preferably natural; avoid human products

Rinsing: Thorough—residue causes irritation

Drying: Complete, especially during monsoon

Case Study: Chronic Yeast

Bella, a 2-year-old Cocker Spaniel in Mumbai, battled yeast infections since puppyhood. Multiple antifungals, steroids—symptoms always returned worse. Assessment: Chicken-rice kibble her whole life, weekly baths, annual vaccinations. Ears nearly black with yeast. Protocol: Fresh food diet (no chicken), probiotics, omega-3s, monthly bathing with complete drying, topical Baobab oil. Result: Six weeks—ears pink and clean. Eight months later, remains clear through two monsoons, no medications.

Chapter 7 Checklist

Assess skin issues for underlying causes

Review diet for inflammatory ingredients

Add gut-supportive foods

Reduce bathing frequency

Ensure complete drying after water exposure

Stock natural topical remedies like baobab oil & hemp oil

Address environmental factors

The skin is a window into overall health. When you heal the gut, support immunity, and remove inflammatory triggers, the skin often heals itself.



End of Part II

THE REBEL TEENAGER

You have navigated adolescence—the T-Rex energy, socialization challenges, and skin issues. Your teenager is maturing. Next comes the prime of life.

PART III

THE PRIME

Building Longevity

Focus: 1.5 to 7 Years

CHAPTER VIII: Working With Vets

Building a Partnership, Not a Dependency

"The best veterinary care happens when an informed guardian and a skilled veterinarian work as partners—each bringing essential knowledge the other lacks."

The Holistic-Conventional Divide

Veterinarians save lives. Emergency care, surgical intervention, diagnostic imaging, and acute illness management require skills and equipment that no amount of turmeric or bone broth can replace.

But conventional veterinary medicine has limitations. It's designed primarily for crisis intervention—diagnosing disease, treating symptoms, managing emergencies. What it often lacks is a framework for **optimizing health** before disease occurs, or for addressing the **root causes** of chronic conditions rather than perpetually managing symptoms.

The goal isn't to choose between conventional and holistic approaches. It's to integrate them intelligently—using each where it excels.

Finding the Right Veterinarian

Not all veterinarians are created equal, and not every vet is the right fit for a holistic-minded dog parent. Here's what to look for:

Green Flags

Listens before prescribing: Takes a thorough history, asks about diet, lifestyle, environment

Explains reasoning: Tells you why they're recommending something, not just what to do

Open to discussion: Doesn't dismiss your questions or research

Respects informed refusal: Accepts your decision when you decline recommendations after discussion

Stays current: Aware of evolving research, doesn't just follow decades-old protocols

Considers the whole picture: Asks about stress, behavior, home environment—not just physical symptoms

Red Flags

Dismissive of questions: "I'm the doctor, just trust me"

Cookie-cutter protocols: Same recommendations for every dog regardless of individual factors

Fear-based persuasion: "Your dog will die if you don't do this"

Hostile to diet discussion: Refuses to consider anything but commercial food

Pushes unnecessary products: Prescription diets and supplements for conditions that don't require them

Rushes appointments: 5-minute consultations, no time for questions

The Veterinary Landscape in India

India's veterinary sector has evolved rapidly, but significant variation exists:

Types of practices:

- ☐ **Traditional clinics:** Often one-vet operations, varying in equipment and expertise
- ☐ **Corporate chains:** Standardized care, sometimes rigid protocols
- ☐ **Specialty hospitals:** Available in major metros, offer advanced diagnostics
- ☐ **Integrative practitioners:** Rare but growing—vets who combine conventional and holistic

In smaller cities and towns, options may be limited. You may need to build relationships with multiple practitioners—one for emergencies, another for routine care who aligns with your philosophy, perhaps a holistic practitioner for consultations.

Having Productive Conversations

The way you communicate with your vet matters, coming in combative or dismissive damages the relationship. Coming informed and collaborative builds it.

Before the Appointment

Write down your observations: When did symptoms start? What changed?

Note diet, supplements, and any recent changes

Prepare specific questions you want answered

Bring previous records if seeing a new vet

During the Appointment

Ask "why": "Why do you recommend this test/treatment?"

Ask about alternatives: "What are the other options? What if we wait and monitor?"

Understand risks and benefits: "What are the potential side effects?"

Ask for prognosis: "What happens if we do nothing? What's the expected outcome with treatment?"

Request time if needed: "Can I take a day to consider this before deciding?"

Phrases That Help

"I've read that... what's your perspective on this?"

"I'm concerned about... can we discuss alternatives?"

"Help me understand the reasoning behind this recommendation."

"What would you do if this were your dog?"

Common Areas of Disagreement

You may encounter friction in these areas. Knowing the evidence helps you have informed discussions:

Diet

Many vets receive minimal nutrition training and what they do receive is often sponsored by commercial pet food companies. They may be skeptical or hostile to fresh/raw feeding.

Your approach: Don't argue. Simply state what you're feeding. If pressed, you can mention you're working with a certified canine nutritionist. Focus on measurable outcomes—if your dog is thriving, that's the evidence.

Vaccination Frequency

Many vets still recommend annual boosters despite WSAVA guidelines supporting 3-year intervals for core vaccines and titer testing as an alternative.

Your approach: Reference WSAVA guidelines directly. Ask about titer testing availability. If your vet won't accommodate 3-year protocols, find one who will.

Immediate Medication

For non-emergency issues like mild digestive upset, minor skin irritation, or behavioral changes, some vets immediately reach for medications that may not be necessary.

Your approach: Ask what happens if you wait and monitor. Ask if there are lifestyle or dietary interventions to try first. Be clear that you prefer minimal intervention when appropriate.

When to Seek a Second Opinion

Second opinions are always appropriate. You're not being disloyal to your vet—you're being responsible. Seek another perspective when:

- ☐ Major surgery is recommended
- ☐ A serious diagnosis is made
- ☐ Treatment isn't working after reasonable time
- ☐ Something feels off about the recommendation
 - You're considering euthanasia
- ☐ Long-term medication is prescribed

Building Your Health Team

The ideal setup includes:

- ☐ **Primary care vet:** For routine care, minor issues, vaccinations
- ☐ **Emergency hospital:** Know the nearest 24-hour facility before you need it
- ☐ **Specialists:** Dermatologist, cardiologist, oncologist—know who to consult for specific issues
- ☐ **Holistic practitioner:** For integrative approaches, chronic condition management
- ☐ **Canine nutritionist:** For diet formulation and troubleshooting

Understanding Common Tests

Knowledge helps you participate in decisions. Know what these common diagnostics reveal:

Test	What It Shows
CBC (Complete Blood Count)	Red/white blood cells, platelets—infections, anemia, immune issues
Chemistry Panel	Organ function: liver, kidneys, blood sugar, electrolytes
Urinalysis	Kidney function, infections, diabetes, concentration ability
Thyroid Panel	Thyroid function—common cause of weight, skin, energy issues
Tick Panel	Ehrlichia, Babesia, other tick-borne diseases (critical in India)
Titer Test	Antibody levels to specific diseases—vaccine immunity status

Tick-Borne Diseases: The Indian Reality

With nearly **50% prevalence** in some regions, tick-borne diseases are a fact of life in India. Know the signs and insist on testing if your dog shows:

- Fever, lethargy, loss of appetite
- ☐ Pale gums (anemia)
- ☐ Joint pain, limping
- ☐ Unexplained weight loss
- ☐ Bleeding disorders

Ehrlichiosis, Babesiosis, and Anaplasmosis are the major threats, early detection saves lives.

Chapter 8 Checklist

- Identify a primary care vet who aligns with your philosophy
- Locate nearest 24-hour emergency facility
- Research specialists in your area for future reference
- Prepare questions before appointments
- Keep organized records of all vet visits
- Establish baseline blood work for healthy comparison
- Know the signs of tick-borne disease
- Build relationship based on mutual respect

Your veterinarian should be a partner in your dog's health journey—not the sole decision-maker. The best outcomes happen when medical expertise combines with the daily observations and philosophical framework you bring as your dog's guardian.

Trust your instincts, ask questions, and never be afraid to advocate for your dog.



* * *

CHAPTER IX: The Gut-Brain Connection

How the Microbiome Shapes Behavior and Health

"The gut is the second brain—and in many ways, it's the first. Over 90% of serotonin is produced there, making every meal a psychiatric intervention."

The Microbiome Revolution

The gut microbiome—the trillions of bacteria, fungi, and other microorganisms living in the digestive tract—has emerged as perhaps the most important factor in overall health. Research led by scientists like Dr. Jan Suchodolski at Texas A&M (recipient of the 2024 AVMA Award for his microbiome work) has transformed our understanding of how the gut influences virtually every body system.

The microbiome is not a passive bystander. It actively:

- ❑ **Produces neurotransmitters:** Over 90% of serotonin and 50% of dopamine are produced in the gut
- ❑ **Regulates immune function:** 70% of immune tissue resides in the gut
- ❑ **Synthesizes vitamins:** B vitamins, vitamin K produced by gut bacteria
- ❑ **Protects against pathogens:** Healthy bacteria outcompete harmful ones
- ❑ **Influences metabolism:** Affects weight, energy extraction from food
- ❑ **Communicates with the brain:** Via the vagus nerve, creating the gut-brain axis

The Gut-Brain Axis: A Two-Way Highway

The gut and brain are in constant communication through multiple pathways:

The Vagus Nerve:

The longest cranial nerve connects the gut directly to the brain. Signals travel both directions—gut bacteria influence brain chemistry, and stress from the brain affects gut function. This is why stress causes digestive upset and why digestive problems cause anxiety.

Neurotransmitter Production: Serotonin, often called the "happiness molecule," regulates mood, sleep, and behavior. The vast majority is produced in the gut by enterochromaffin cells, influenced by gut bacteria. An unhealthy gut literally produces less happiness.

Inflammatory Signaling:

Gut dysbiosis (microbial imbalance) produces inflammatory compounds that cross the blood-brain barrier. Chronic low-grade inflammation is linked to anxiety, depression, and cognitive decline—in dogs as in humans.

How Behavior Problems Start in the Gut

Before reaching for behavioral medication or intensive training, consider whether the gut is contributing:

Anxiety and Reactivity

Dogs with gut dysbiosis often show heightened anxiety, reactivity to triggers, and difficulty calming down. The mechanisms: reduced serotonin production, increased cortisol from gut-inflammation, and hypersensitivity of the vagus nerve.

Aggression

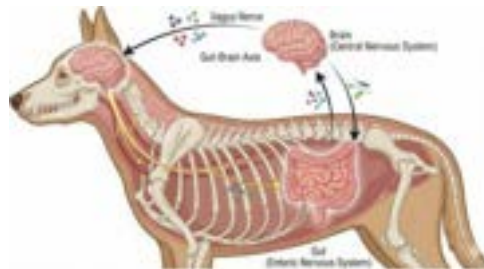
Impulsive aggression can have neurological roots in gut health. Tryptophan (precursor to serotonin) metabolism is influenced by gut bacteria. Low serotonin is associated with impulsivity and aggression across species.

Cognitive Issues

Dogs with brain fog, poor learning, or early cognitive decline may be experiencing neuroinflammation from gut origin. The Dog Aging Project has found that gut microbiome composition is one of the strongest predictors of cognitive health in aging dogs.

Obsessive Behaviors

Tail chasing, shadow chasing, excessive licking—these compulsive behaviors have been linked to altered gut microbiome composition and may respond to gut-focused interventions alongside behavioral therapy.



What Damages the Microbiome

The modern dog's microbiome is under constant assault:

Antibiotics

Necessary for treating bacterial infections, but antibiotics are nuclear weapons to the microbiome—destroying beneficial bacteria along with pathogens. A single course can alter the microbiome for months. **After every antibiotic course, aggressive probiotic supplementation and prebiotic-rich foods are essential for recovery.**

Ultra-Processed Food

Kibble lacks the fiber diversity that feeds beneficial bacteria. It's also low in moisture, contains synthetic nutrients instead of natural ones, and includes preservatives that may affect gut flora. The DogRisk research showed dramatically different microbiome composition in kibble-fed versus fresh-fed dogs.

Chronic Stress

Stress hormones alter gut motility and change the environment bacteria live in, dogs in chronic stress states have measurably different (and less healthy) microbiome composition than relaxed dogs.

NSAIDs and PPIs

Common pain medications (Rimadyl, Meloxicam) and acid-reducers (omeprazole) affect gut lining and bacterial balance. Necessary sometimes, but awareness of gut impact allows for mitigating strategies.

Environmental Toxins

Pesticides, herbicides, heavy metals, and the chemicals discussed in Chapter 1 all affect gut health. Glyphosate (common herbicide) has been shown to disrupt gut bacteria by inhibiting a pathway they depend on.

Building a Healthy Microbiome

1. Dietary Diversity

Different bacterial species thrive on different foods. A varied diet supports diversity:

- ☐ Rotate protein sources (chicken, mutton, fish, eggs)
- ☐ Include variety of vegetables (leafy greens, pumpkin, carrots)
- ☐ Add fermented foods (curd, kefir)
- ☐ Incorporate different organ meats

2. Prebiotic Foods

Prebiotics are fibers that feed beneficial bacteria. Include:

- ☐ **Pumpkin:** Excellent source of soluble fiber
- ☐ **Bananas (ripe):** In small amounts, provide inulin
- ☐ **Mushrooms:** Beta-glucans support immune function
- ☐ **Leafy greens:** Spinach, moringa—fiber and micronutrients

3. Probiotic Foods and Supplements

Probiotics are live beneficial bacteria:

- ☐ **Plain curd/dahi:** Natural source of Lactobacillus strains
- ☐ **Kefir:** More diverse strains than curd
- ☐ **Quality supplements:** Multi-strain, dog-specific formulations; look for CFU counts in billions

4. Bone Broth

Bone broth provides collagen, gelatin, and amino acids (glutamine, glycine) that support gut lining integrity. Make it at home—simmer bones for 12-24 hours, skim fat, serve or freeze in portions. Add a splash of apple cider vinegar during cooking to extract more minerals.

5. Avoid Unnecessary Medications

When antibiotics are necessary, use them. But question whether every course is truly needed. Ask about alternatives for minor issues. When medications are used, support the gut aggressively during and after treatment.

Signs of Gut Dysfunction

Beyond digestive symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting, gas), gut dysfunction may present as:

- ☐ Chronic skin issues (the gut-skin axis)
- ☐ Recurring ear infections
- ☐ Unexplained anxiety or behavior changes
 - Poor coat quality
- ☐ Bad breath
- ☐ Constant hunger or lack of appetite
- ☐ Low energy
- ☐ Frequent infections (immune suppression)

Case Study: The Anxious Labrador

Cooper, a 3-year-old Labradoodle, developed severe anxiety—panting, pacing, unable to settle. He'd been on anxiety medication for 8 months with minimal improvement. History revealed: Two courses of antibiotics in the past year (ear infections), chronic loose stools, poor coat. He'd been eating the same kibble brand for years. The approach: Transition to fresh food diet over 4 weeks. Bone broth daily. High-quality probiotic. Hemp (Omega-3) supplementation. No dietary changes for 3 months to allow gut healing. Results: Stools normalized within 2 weeks. Coat improved within a month. By month 3, anxiety significantly reduced. By month 6, Cooper was weaned off medication entirely with owner and vet agreement. He remains medication-free two years later.

The Microbiome Testing Option

Microbiome testing is becoming more accessible. Services can analyze a stool sample and provide data on bacterial composition. This can be useful for:

- Identifying specific dysbiosis patterns
- ☐ Monitoring changes after interventions
- ☐ Guiding targeted probiotic selection

However, the field is still evolving. Results should be interpreted with guidance from a practitioner familiar with microbiome science, not just acted upon blindly.

Chapter 9 Checklist

Assess current diet for microbiome support (diversity, prebiotics)

Add fermented foods: curd, kefir Include prebiotic-rich vegetables Make bone broth a regular addition Consider quality probiotic supplement Review medication history for gut impact Support gut aggressively after any antibiotic use Consider gut health in behavioral assessments

The gut is not just where food is digested—it's where health is manufactured, behavior is influenced, and the immune system is trained. Caring for the microbiome

is not alternative medicine; it's fundamental biology that mainstream veterinary practice is only beginning to fully embrace.

Feed the gut, and you feed the whole dog.



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CHAPTER X: Festival Stress

Surviving Diwali, Holi, and High-Stress Events

"For dogs, Diwali isn't a festival of lights—it's days of unpredictable explosions that trigger primal terror. Preparation isn't optional; it's survival."

The Scope of the Problem

Research shows **49-52% of dogs** exhibit significant fear responses to fireworks. In India, this isn't a one-night problem—Diwali celebrations can span 5-10 days, with sporadic firecrackers for weeks before and after. Add other festivals with noise (Holi, various regional celebrations) and dogs can spend a significant portion of the year in distress.

Dogs who experience untreated firework panic often develop:

- ☐ Generalized anxiety that persists beyond the festival
 - Sensitivity to other sudden noises
- ☐ Avoidance of areas where they've experienced fear
- ☐ Association of evening/night with danger
- ☐ Worsening fear responses each year (sensitization)

The Biology of Firework Fear

Understanding why dogs fear fireworks helps you address it properly:

Unpredictability:

Dogs can habituate to regular, predictable sounds. Fireworks are random—different timing, intensity, direction. The brain can't predict and prepare.

Sound characteristics:

Fireworks produce low-frequency booms that dogs feel in their bodies, high-frequency crackling, and sudden onset—all features that trigger startle responses.

Multi-sensory assault:

It's not just sound. Bright flashes, smoke smell, and the air pressure changes from nearby explosions all contribute. Dogs can't escape any of it.

Evolutionary wiring:

Loud, sudden sounds signal danger in nature. The fight-or-flight response that fireworks trigger isn't irrational—it's biology working as designed. The problem is that the response can't resolve when danger continues for days.

The Long-Term Approach: Desensitization

True prevention starts **months before Diwali**, not days. Systematic desensitization is the gold standard:

The Protocol (Start 3-6 Months Before)

1. **Find quality audio:** YouTube has hours of firework recordings. Use good speakers for realistic sound reproduction.
2. **Start barely audible:** Volume so low you can barely hear it. Your dog should show ZERO reaction.
3. **Pair with positive experiences:** Play during meals, training sessions, play time. Sound = good things.
4. **Increase incrementally:** Only raise volume when current level produces no fear response. This takes weeks.
5. **Add visual elements:** Videos of fireworks if possible, though sound is the primary trigger.
6. **If fear appears, go back:** Any fear response means you moved too fast. Return to the previous comfortable level.

Critical: This is not a quick fix. Rushing creates sensitization (worsening fear), not desensitization. Patience is essential.

Short-Term Management: The Diwali Survival Kit

When Diwali arrives, your goal is management—minimizing distress through the event:

Environment Preparation

- **Create a safe room:** Interior room with no windows, or windows heavily covered. Sound-dampening blankets on walls help.
- **White noise:** Fan, air conditioner, or dedicated white noise machine to mask external sounds
- **Calming music:** Through a Dog's Ear or similar music specifically designed for canine relaxation
- **Familiar bedding:** Smells of home and family are comforting
- **Den-like space:** Covered crate or blanket fort where dog can hide
- **Close curtains:** Block light flashes from fireworks

Physical Aids

Pressure wraps (Thundershirt): Constant pressure can calm—like swaddling. Put on 30 minutes before expected noise.

Ear protection: Mutt Muffs or cotton balls (carefully placed, not deep) can reduce sound intensity

Snug-fitting t-shirt: DIY alternative to Thundershirt for mild cases

Natural Supplements

Start these 3-5 days before expected stress, not on the day:

- ☐ **L-theanine:** Amino acid that promotes calm without sedation
- ☐ **Valerian root:** Mild sedative properties; some dogs respond well
- ☐ **Hemp seed oil/ CBD oil:** Quality hemp-derived CBD (not THC) can reduce anxiety more than regular hemp seed oil
- ☐ **Chamomile:** Mild calming effect; can be given as tea or tincture
- ☐ **Adaptil (DAP):** Dog-appeasing pheromone in diffuser, collar, or spray form

Prescription Options

For severe cases, discuss with your vet. Options include:

- ☐ **Sileo (dexmedetomidine):** Specifically approved for noise aversion; given as gel in cheek
- ☐ **Trazodone:** Commonly prescribed for event-based anxiety
- ☐ **Gabapentin:** Can be combined with other medications
- ☐ **Alprazolam:** Fast-acting for acute panic (use carefully, can paradoxically increase fear in some dogs)

Important: Acepromazine (ACP) is still sometimes prescribed but should be avoided. It sedates without reducing fear—the dog is immobilized but still terrified, which can worsen trauma. Please do not give any of the above medicines without consulting your veterinarian.

During the Event: Your Role

- ☐ **Stay calm yourself:** Your anxiety transmits. Model the behavior you want.
- ☐ **Don't force interaction:** If your dog wants to hide, let them. Don't drag them out to comfort them.
- ☐ **Offer quiet company:** Being nearby, doing calm activities, provides reassurance without fuss.
- ☐ **Provide distractions:** Long-lasting chews, stuffed Kongs, lick mats can redirect focus if fear isn't too severe.
- ☐ **Don't punish fear responses:** Barking, whining, pacing are symptoms, not misbehavior.

Holi: A Different Challenge

Holi presents different risks:

Chemical Exposure

Synthetic colors contain heavy metals (lead, mercury), chromium, and other toxins. Even "natural" colors may not be safe for dogs who will lick their coat.

Prevention:

- ☐ Keep dogs indoors during active color play
- ☐ If color gets on coat, wash immediately with gentle shampoo

Apply coconut oil/baobab oil to coat before any potential exposure (creates barrier)

Watch for signs of toxicity: vomiting, lethargy, eye irritation

Water Hazards

Water balloons and buckets can frighten or even injure dogs. Keep dogs secured away from water play areas.

Sweets and Foods

Holi treats often contain ingredients toxic to dogs. Keep all festival foods secured away from dogs.

Other High-Stress Events

Weddings and Celebrations

Indian weddings often feature loud music, firecrackers, and crowds. The same preparation applies—safe space, noise masking, calming aids.

Political Rallies and Processions

Unpredictable, often with loudspeakers and fireworks. Know your local calendar and prepare accordingly.

Thunderstorms

Monsoon brings months of potential stress. The same desensitization protocols apply—and thunderstorm recordings are readily available.

Chapter 10 Checklist

Months Before Diwali:

- Begin sound desensitization protocol
- Research and acquire calming supplements
- Consult vet about prescription options if needed

Weeks Before:

- Prepare safe room with soundproofing
- Start daily supplements
- Acquire pressure wrap, pheromone diffuser
- Update ID tags and microchip registration (many dogs run away during Diwali)

During Event:

- Exercise dog early in the day, before festivities start
- Secure all exits (panicked dogs can escape)
- Provide enrichment and distractions
- Stay calm and present

Festival stress is manageable—but it requires planning, not just reaction. Start early, use multiple strategies in combination, and remember that your calm presence is your dog's greatest comfort.



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CHAPTER XI: Silent Killers

Obesity, Sedentary Living, and ~~Chronic Inflammation~~

"The dangers that kill our dogs slowly don't bark or bite. They accumulate silently—in fat cells, in stiff joints, in minds that aren't challenged."

The Obesity Epidemic

Studies suggest **over 50% of dogs** in developed pet populations are overweight or obese.

Obesity isn't a cosmetic issue. It's a disease state that:

- ☐ **Shortens lifespan:** A landmark Purina study showed lean dogs lived nearly 2 years longer than overweight littermates
- ☐ **Creates chronic inflammation:** Fat tissue produces inflammatory compounds that damage organs

Accelerates joint disease: Extra weight stresses joints and cartilage

Increases cancer risk: Obesity is linked to multiple cancer types

Worsens respiratory function: Especially dangerous in brachycephalic breeds

Stresses the cardiovascular system: Heart works harder to service more tissue

Reduces quality of life: Less play, less mobility, less joy

Recognizing Obesity

Many owners don't recognize obesity because it becomes normalized. Use the **Body Condition Score (BCS)** system:

Score	Description
1-3	Underweight: Ribs, spine visible. No fat cover. Muscle wasting.
4-5	IDEAL: Ribs easily felt with light pressure. Visible waist from above. Abdominal tuck.
6-7	Overweight: Ribs felt with firm pressure. Waist barely visible. Fat deposits forming.
8-9	Obese: Ribs cannot be felt. No waist. Obvious fat deposits. Abdomen distended.

The hands-on test: Run your hands along your dog's sides. You should feel ribs with light pressure—like feeling the back of your hand. If you have to press firmly, or can't feel ribs at all, your dog is overweight.

The Causes: More Than Just Calories

While "calories in, calories out" matters, obesity is more complex:

Overfeeding

Package feeding guidelines are often excessive—designed by companies who profit when you buy more food. Free-feeding (food always available) guarantees overconsumption in most dogs.

Treat Excess

Treats should be maximum 10% of daily calories. Many dogs receive far more—and commercial treats are calorie-dense. A few biscuits daily can add significant weight over months.

Table Scraps

In Indian households, dogs often receive portions of family meals. Roti, rice, ghee-laden preparations—these add up quickly.

Neutering/Spaying

Altered dogs have reduced metabolic rates and may need 25-30% fewer calories than intact dogs. Most owners don't adjust portions after surgery.

Lack of Exercise

Urban Indian dogs often live in apartments with minimal activity. Two short bathroom breaks daily is not sufficient exercise for any dog.

Metabolic Issues

Hypothyroidism and other conditions can contribute. If weight doesn't respond to diet/exercise changes, thyroid testing is warranted.

The Weight Loss Protocol

Safe weight loss: 1-2% of body weight per week. Faster loss stresses the liver.

Step 1: Calculate Actual Requirements

Calculate calories for **ideal weight**, not current weight. A 35kg dog who should weigh 28kg eats for a 28kg dog.

Step 2: Measure Everything

Use kitchen scale. "A cup" varies wildly in actual quantity. Weigh food in grams.

Step 3: Cut Treats Dramatically

Use portion of daily food allowance for training. Substitute low-calorie alternatives: green beans, carrots, dehydrated single-ingredient treats.

Step 4: Increase Activity Gradually

Overweight dogs are at injury risk. Start with gentle, brief exercise and build duration. Swimming is ideal—no joint stress.

Step 5: Weigh Weekly

Track progress. No change after 2-3 weeks means portions need further reduction or activity needs to increase.

The Sedentary Lifestyle Epidemic

Even dogs at healthy weight suffer when they don't move enough. Exercise provides:

- ☐ **Cardiovascular health:** Heart and lungs need to work to stay strong
- ☐ **Joint lubrication:** Movement produces synovial fluid that nourishes cartilage
- ☐ **Mental stimulation:** Novel environments, smells, experiences keep the brain active
- ☐ **Stress relief:** Physical activity reduces cortisol and releases endorphins
- ☐ **Behavioral benefits:** Tired dogs are well-behaved dogs
- ☐ **Digestive health:** Movement promotes gut motility

Dog Type	Minimum Daily	Ideal Daily
High-energy breeds (Labs, GSDs, Indies)	60 minutes	90-120 minutes
Medium-energy breeds (Beagles, Cocker Spaniels)	45 minutes	60-90 minutes
Low-energy breeds (Bulldogs, Shih Tzus)	30 minutes	45-60 minutes
Senior dogs (7+ years)	20-30 minutes	Multiple short sessions

Note: Mental exercise counts. Sniff walks, training sessions, puzzle toys all contribute to meeting needs. Physical exercise alone isn't enough—the brain needs work too.

Chronic Inflammation: The Hidden Killer

Inflammation is the body's response to injury or threat. Acute inflammation heals. **Chronic low-grade inflammation** slowly destroys.

Sources of chronic inflammation:

- ☐ **Obesity:** Fat tissue produces inflammatory cytokines
- ☐ **Poor diet:** Processed foods, omega-6 excess, high-glycemic ingredients
- ☐ **Gut dysbiosis:** Leaky gut allows inflammatory compounds into bloodstream
- ☐ **Dental disease:** Gum infection seeds bacteria and inflammation throughout body
- ☐ **Environmental toxins:** The chemicals discussed in Chapter 1
- ☐ **Chronic stress:** Cortisol dysregulation promotes inflammation

Chronic inflammation contributes to nearly every degenerative disease: arthritis, cognitive decline, cancer, heart disease, diabetes.

Anti-Inflammatory Lifestyle

- ☐ **Fresh, species-appropriate diet:** As discussed in Chapter 4
- ☐ **Omega-3 supplementation:** Anchovies, sardines, hemp seed oil
- ☐ **Maintain healthy weight:** Perhaps the single most impactful intervention
- ☐ **Regular exercise:** Anti-inflammatory effects of movement
- ☐ **Dental care:** Regular cleaning, raw bones for maintenance, professional cleaning when needed
- ☐ **Stress reduction:** Predictable routine, adequate rest, minimal chronic stressors
- ☐ **Antioxidant-rich foods:** Berries, leafy greens, turmeric
- ☐ **Chemical-free environment:** Reduce toxic load on the system

Chapter 11 Checklist

Assess your dog's Body Condition Score honestly
 Calculate appropriate calorie intake for ideal weight
 Start weighing food portions accurately
 Audit treat consumption and reduce if excessive

- Establish daily exercise routine appropriate to breed
- Include mental stimulation daily
- Address sources of chronic inflammation
- Schedule dental assessment
- Weigh dog monthly to track trends

The silent killers don't announce themselves. They accumulate gradually—a little extra weight, a little less activity, a little more inflammation—until disease becomes undeniable. The solution is equally gradual: consistent daily choices that compound into long-term health.



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CHAPTER XII: Longevity Protocols

Maximizing Healthspan, Not Just Lifespan

"The goal isn't just more years—it's more good years. A decade of vibrant health beats fifteen years of slow decline."

The Science of Canine Longevity

The **DogAging Project**, studying over 40,000 dogs, is revolutionizing our understanding of canine aging. Key findings are emerging about what predicts healthy aging—and much of it is actionable.

What the research shows extends lifespan and healthspan:

- ☐ **Caloric restriction:** The Purina lifespan study showed lean dogs lived 1.8 years longer than overweight littermates
- ☐ **Fresh food diet:** DogRisk studies show reduced disease incidence with non-processed diets
- ☐ **Gut microbiome health:** Diverse, healthy microbiome strongly correlates with healthy aging
- ☐ **Regular exercise:** Active dogs show slower cognitive and physical decline
- ☐ **Social engagement:** Dogs with regular social contact and mental stimulation age better
- ☐ **Early disease detection:** Regular screening catches problems when they're treatable

The Longevity Diet

Everything discussed in Chapter 4 applies throughout life, but adult dogs have specific considerations:

Caloric Restriction Without Malnutrition

The evidence for moderate caloric restriction extending lifespan is strong across species. This doesn't mean starving your dog—it means feeding to maintain **lean body condition** (BCS 4-5), not the plump condition many owners prefer.

Protein Quality and Quantity

Adult dogs need high-quality protein to maintain muscle mass. As dogs age, protein becomes **more** important, not less—despite outdated advice to reduce protein in seniors. The key is quality (easily digestible animal protein) not reduction.

Anti-Aging Compounds

Certain foods provide compounds that combat aging processes:

- ☐ **Blueberries:** Anthocyanins support cognitive function
- ☐ **Baobab fruit:** (My Personal Fav) Baobab is the “Tree of Life” -

Property	Primary Mechanism against Aging
High Antioxidants (ORAC)	Neutralizes free radicals to stop cellular "rusting" and DNA damage.
Vitamin C	Essential for collagen production (skin elasticity) and robust immunity.
Polyphenols	Reduces chronic, low-grade inflammation ("inflammaging").
Prebiotic Fiber	Nourishes the gut microbiome, linked to longevity and metabolic health.
Potassium & Magnesium	Supports heart health, blood pressure regulation, and bone density.

- ☐ **Fatty fish:** EPA/DHA reduce inflammation and support brain health
- ☐ **Turmeric:** Curcumin has anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective properties
- ☐ **Bone broth:** Collagen supports joint and gut health
- ☐ **Leafy greens:** Chlorophyll and antioxidants combat oxidative stress
- ☐ **Eggs:** Choline supports cognitive function

The Annual Longevity Protocol

Starting around age 5-6 (earlier for giant breeds), implement annual longevity screening:

Blood Work

- ☐ **Complete Blood Count (CBC):** Detects anemia, infection, immune issues
- ☐ **Chemistry Panel:** Assesses liver, kidney, and metabolic function
- ☐ **Thyroid Panel:** Hypothyroidism is common in middle-aged dogs
- ☐ **Urinalysis:** Early kidney disease detection

Physical Assessment

- ☐ **Body condition scoring:** Maintain lean weight
- ☐ **Joint evaluation:** Check for early arthritis signs
- ☐ **Dental examination:** Dental disease accelerates aging
- ☐ **Skin and coat:** Reflects internal health
- ☐ **Lump checks:** Early cancer detection

Cognitive Assessment

Monitor for signs of cognitive decline (covered in detail in Chapter 13). Early intervention matters—cognitive support should start **before** symptoms appear, not after.

Longevity Supplements

Beyond diet, certain supplements show promise for extending healthspan:

Supplement	Benefit	Notes
Omega-3 (EPA/DHA)	Anti-inflammatory, cognitive support	Hemp oil or algae-based
Probiotics	Gut and immune health	Multi-strain, dog-specific
Glucosamine/Chondroitin	Joint health	Start before symptoms, Chicken feet
CoQ10	Cellular energy, heart health	Especially for heart-prone breeds, Sardines
Vitamin E	Antioxidant	Partner with omega-3s (Hemp)

Exercise for Longevity

Not just any exercise—the right exercise promotes longevity:

Low-Impact Cardio

Walking, swimming, gentle hiking. Maintains cardiovascular health without joint stress. As dogs age, intensity decreases but consistency remains.

Strength Maintenance

Hills, stairs (in moderation), balance exercises. Muscle mass protects joints and maintains mobility. "Use it or lose it" applies absolutely to dogs.

Flexibility and Balance

Varied terrain, balance activities, gentle stretching. Proprioception (body awareness) declines with age—regular challenges maintain it.

Mental Exercise

Training new skills, puzzle toys, scent work, novel experiences. The brain needs exercise as much as the body. Dogs who stop learning age faster cognitively.

Environmental Factors

Social Connection

Dogs with regular positive social interactions (with humans and appropriate dogs) show better cognitive function in old age. Isolation accelerates decline.

Stress Reduction

Chronic stress accelerates cellular aging. Predictable routines, adequate rest, appropriate challenges without overwhelming stress.

Sleep Quality

Quality sleep is when cellular repair happens. Ensure comfortable sleeping area, appropriate temperature, quiet environment, and undisturbed rest.

Toxic Load Reduction

The cumulative effect of environmental toxins compounds over time. Every reduction matters—the chemical-free home discussed in Chapter 1 becomes more important with age.

Emerging Longevity Research

The field is rapidly evolving. Areas showing promise:

- ☐ **Rapamycin:** Currently in clinical trials for canine longevity (Dog Aging Project TRIAD study)
- ☐ **NAD+ precursors:** Compounds like NMN that support cellular energy (research ongoing)
- ☐ **Senolytics:** Compounds that clear senescent (aged) cells
- ☐ **Microbiome interventions:** Targeted probiotic therapies for aging

Stay informed, but be cautious about unproven interventions. What works in mice doesn't always work in dogs, and what sounds promising may have undiscovered risks.

Chapter 12 Checklist

- Maintain lean body condition (BCS 4-5)
- Feed species-appropriate, fresh food diet
- Include anti-aging foods regularly
- Establish annual longevity screening after age 5-6
- Consider longevity supplements appropriate to age
- Maintain consistent, appropriate exercise
- Provide regular mental stimulation
- Ensure adequate social connection
- Optimize sleep quality
- Reduce environmental toxic load

Longevity isn't about adding years of decline—it's about compressing decline into a shorter period at the end of a longer, healthier life. The prime years are when you build the foundation. Every choice compounds. Start now.



End of Part III

THE PRIME

The prime years are your opportunity to build resilience—through partnership with good veterinarians, gut health optimization, stress management, weight control, and proactive longevity protocols.

What comes next—the sunset years—will be shaped by
the choices made now.

PART IV

THE SUNSET

Graceful Aging

Focus: 7+ Years

CHAPTER XIII: The Graying Mind

Cognitive Health in Senior Dogs

"When the mind begins to fade, it's not giving up—it's the neurons doing their best with diminishing resources. Our job is to supply those resources."

Canine Cognitive Dysfunction: The Silent Epidemic

Research indicates that **35% of dogs over age 8** show signs of cognitive decline, rising to **68% in dogs over 15**. Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (CCD) is the canine equivalent of dementia—progressive and currently incurable, but often manageable with early intervention.

Many dogs suffer silently because owners dismiss early signs as "just getting old."

This is a mistake. Early intervention can significantly slow progression and maintain quality of life.

Recognizing Cognitive Decline: DISHAA

The DISHAA acronym helps identify cognitive dysfunction:

D – Disorientation

- ☐ Getting lost in familiar places
- ☐ Standing at the wrong side of doors
- ☐ Staring at walls or into space
- ☐ Getting stuck in corners

I – Interaction Changes

- ☐ Decreased interest in petting or attention
- ☐ Not recognizing familiar people initially
- ☐ Withdrawal from family activities

S – Sleep-Wake Cycle Changes

- ☐ Sleeping more during the day
- ☐ Restless or pacing at night
- ☐ Nighttime vocalization or barking

H – House Soiling

- ☐ Accidents despite being housetrained for years
 - Forgetting to signal need to go outside
- ☐ Eliminating in unusual locations

A – Activity Level Changes

- ☐ Decreased interest in play
- ☐ Aimless wandering or pacing
- ☐ Repetitive behaviors

A – Anxiety

- ☐ New fears or phobias
 - Increased clinginess or separation anxiety
- ☐ General restlessness

Nutritional Intervention

The brain is highly dependent on nutrition, targeted nutrition can support cognitive function:

Brain-Essential Nutrients

- ☐ **Omega-3 fatty acids (DHA/EPA):** DHA makes up 40% of brain phospholipids. Supplementation is essential.
- ☐ **Antioxidants:** Vitamin E, C, selenium, and phytonutrients combat oxidative stress in the brain
- ☐ **B vitamins:** Essential for neurotransmitter synthesis
- ☐ **Phosphatidylserine:** Cell membrane component important for cognitive function

Brain-Supportive Foods

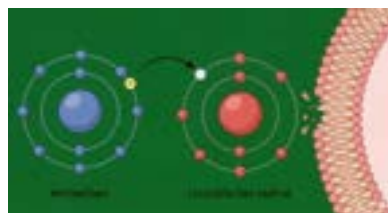
Fatty fish (sardines, Anchovies): DHA source

Eggs: Choline for neurotransmitter production

Blueberries: Anthocyanins cross blood-brain barrier

Leafy greens: Antioxidants and micronutrients

Baobab fruit: Its benefits for the brain are largely due to its high concentration of antioxidants, anti-inflammatory compounds, and essential nutrients.



Environmental Enrichment

Mental stimulation is as important as nutrition for maintaining cognitive function:

- ☐ **Novel experiences:** New walking routes, new environments, new people
- ☐ **Training:** Teaching new tricks exercises the brain—yes, even in senior dogs
- ☐ **Puzzle feeders:** Make the brain work for food
- ☐ **Sniff walks:** Scent processing is powerful brain exercise
- ☐ **Social interaction:** Regular engagement with family members
- ☐ **Consistent routine:** Reduces confusion while providing predictability

Medical Support

Discuss with your vet:

- ☐ **Selegiline (Anipryl):** FDA-approved for canine cognitive dysfunction; increases dopamine
- ☐ **SAME:** Supports liver and brain; available as supplement
- ☐ **Melatonin:** Helps regulate sleep-wake cycles
- ☐ **Anti-anxiety medications:** When anxiety significantly impacts quality of life (Natural Hemp derived CBD oil works wonders)

Managing Life with Cognitive Decline

When CCD progresses despite intervention:

- ☐ **Keep environment consistent:** Don't rearrange furniture or change routines
- ☐ **Use nightlights:** Helps with nighttime disorientation
- ☐ **Increase potty breaks:** Don't punish accidents—the dog isn't choosing to soil
- ☐ **Safety-proof the home:** Block stairs, cover sharp corners
- ☐ **Maintain connection:** Physical touch, calm voice, presence
- ☐ **Consider quality of life:** When suffering outweighs good days, difficult decisions arise

Chapter 13 Checklist

- Learn the DISHAA signs of cognitive decline
- Add omega-3 and MCT oil to senior diet
- Include brain-supportive foods
- Provide daily mental enrichment
- Maintain social interaction
- Keep routine consistent
- Discuss medical options with vet if signs appear
- Adapt home environment for safety

Cognitive decline is not inevitable, and its progression can be slowed. The key is early intervention—don't wait until the mind is significantly affected to start brain-

supportive measures. Every senior dog deserves the chance to keep their lights on as long as possible.



* * *

CHAPTER XIV: The Aging Body

Managing Physical Decline with Grace

*"Age is not a disease to be cured, but a process to be managed.
Our role shifts from prevention to comfort, from curing to
caring."*

When Does "Senior" Begin?

The onset of senior status varies dramatically by size:

Size	Senior Begins	Average Lifespan
Small (<10 kg)	9-11 years	12-16 years
Medium (10-25 kg)	8-10 years	10-14 years
Large (25-40 kg)	7-8 years	8-12 years
Giant (>40 kg)	5-6 years	6-10 years

Indian street dogs (Indies) often show remarkable longevity, with many reaching 14-16 years when well-cared for—a testament to their robust genetics.

Arthritis and Joint Disease

By far the most common age-related condition, osteoarthritis affects the majority of senior dogs. The cartilage that cushions joints wears away, bones rub together, inflammation builds, and pain follows.

Signs of Joint Pain

- ☐ Reluctance to jump, climb stairs, or rise from rest
- ☐ Stiffness, especially after rest (worse in cold weather)
- ☐ Limping or favoring a leg
- ☐ Decreased activity or reluctance to walk
- ☐ Muscle wasting, especially in hind legs
- ☐ Behavioral changes: irritability, withdrawal
- ☐ Excessive licking of joints

Holistic Joint Support

Nutrition:

- ☐ **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Anti-inflammatory; high doses often needed
- ☐ **Glucosamine/Chondroitin:** Building blocks for cartilage repair
- ☐ **Green-lipped mussel:** Natural source of joint-supporting compounds
- ☐ **Turmeric/curcumin:** Anti-inflammatory (with black pepper for absorption)
- ☐ **Bone broth:** Collagen and glycosaminoglycans
- ☐ **Maintain lean weight:** Every excess kilo stresses joints

Physical Support:

- ☐ **Low-impact exercise:** Swimming is ideal; short, frequent walks better than long ones
- ☐ **Physical therapy:** Massage, range-of-motion exercises, hydrotherapy
- ☐ **Orthopedic bedding:** Memory foam supports joints during rest
- ☐ **Ramps:** For getting in/out of cars, onto furniture
- ☐ **Non-slip flooring:** Rugs on slippery surfaces
- ☐ **Warmth:** Joint wraps, heated beds in cold weather

Medical Options:

- ☐ **NSAIDs:** Effective but require monitoring for GI and kidney effects
- ☐ **Adequan injections:** Disease-modifying; protects remaining cartilage
- ☐ **Librela (anti-NGF antibody):** Monthly injection; newer option with good results
- ☐ **Acupuncture:** Evidence supports efficacy for arthritis pain

Vision and Hearing Loss

Sensory decline is common in senior dogs:

Vision

- ☐ **Nuclear sclerosis:** Bluish haze in eyes—normal aging, minimal vision impact
- ☐ **Cataracts:** White opacity blocking vision—can be surgically removed if needed
- ☐ **Retinal degeneration:** Progressive; night vision goes first

Adapting to vision loss:

- ☐ Keep furniture in consistent positions
- ☐ Use scent markers at key locations
 - Speak before touching
- ☐ Block dangerous areas (stairs, pools)

Hearing

Hearing loss is often gradual—owners may mistake it for selective listening or stubbornness.

Adapting to hearing loss:

- ☐ Use hand signals (train these before hearing goes)
- ☐ Use vibration to get attention (stomp floor, tap dog gently)
- ☐ Keep on leash outdoors—can't hear cars or your call
- ☐ Approach in their field of vision to avoid startling

Dental Disease

By senior years, many dogs have significant dental disease. This isn't just about bad breath—oral bacteria enter the bloodstream, affecting heart, liver, and kidneys.

- ☐ **Signs:** Bad breath, difficulty eating, dropping food, drooling, pawing at mouth
- ☐ **Treatment:** Professional cleaning under anesthesia (yes, senior dogs can handle anesthesia with proper pre-screening)
- ☐ **Maintenance:** Dehydrated bones for dogs who can chew, enzymatic toothpaste, water additives

Incontinence

Loss of bladder control—especially in spayed females—can develop in senior years. This is not a behavioral issue.

- ☐ **Medical treatment:** Proin (phenylpropanolamine) or hormone supplementation often effective
- ☐ **Management:** Waterproof bedding, frequent potty breaks, doggy diapers for severe cases
- ☐ **Rule out other causes:** UTI, diabetes, kidney disease

Organ Function Decline

As dogs age, organ reserve diminishes:

- ☐ **Kidney disease:** Often asymptomatic until advanced. Annual bloodwork catches early decline. Low-phosphorus diet, increased water intake, supplements
- ☐ **Liver disease:** Signs include decreased appetite, vomiting, jaundice. Liver-supportive supplements (SAMe, milk thistle)
- ☐ **Heart disease:** Coughing, exercise intolerance, fainting. Medications can manage; omega-3s, CoQ10, taurine supportive
- ☐ **Hypothyroidism:** Lethargy, weight gain, skin issues. Easily managed with supplementation

Cancer

Cancer is the leading cause of death in dogs over 10. Early detection improves outcomes:

- ☐ **Warning signs:** Lumps (especially rapidly growing), unexplained weight loss, lethargy, loss of appetite, bleeding, difficulty breathing/eating/urinating
- ☐ **Regular screening:** Monthly home lump checks, semi-annual vet exams for seniors
- ☐ **Treatment options:** Surgery, chemotherapy, radiation—discuss quality of life, not just survival time

The Senior Diet

Senior dogs have specific nutritional needs:

- ☐ **Maintain protein:** Don't reduce—seniors need MORE quality protein to prevent muscle wasting
- ☐ **Moderate calories:** Metabolism slows; adjust to maintain lean weight
- ☐ **Increase omega-3s:** Brain and joint support
- ☐ **Digestibility matters more:** Fresh food is easier to process than processed food
- ☐ **Softer texture:** If dental issues make chewing difficult
- ☐ **More frequent, smaller meals:** Easier on the digestive system

Chapter 14 Checklist

Schedule semi-annual vet exams for seniors
Annual (or more frequent) bloodwork
Implement joint support supplements
Provide orthopedic bedding
Add non-slip surfaces to floors
Install ramps where needed
Address dental health
Adjust diet for senior needs
Monthly lump checks
Train hand signals before hearing declines

The aging body requires adaptation—from both the dog and the guardian. Our role becomes one of support, comfort, and accommodation. The goal is not to fight aging but to age gracefully, maintaining quality of life as capacity diminishes.



* * *

CHAPTER XV: The Final Gift

End of Life Care and the Hardest Decision

"The last gift we give them is the promise that they will not suffer. It is the hardest decision, and the purest act of love."

The Weight of the Decision

No chapter in this book is harder to write, and none will be harder for you to read when the time comes. We've spent hundreds of pages discussing how to give your dog the best possible life. Now we must discuss how to give them the best possible death.

Unlike humans, dogs can't tell us when they're suffering. They can't say "I'm ready" or "please help me." They rely on us to recognize when their quality of life has declined beyond recovery, and to act with courage when the time comes.

This is not giving up. This is not abandonment. This is the final act of guardianship—ensuring that a beloved companion doesn't suffer unnecessarily.

Hospice Care: Comfort at the End

When cure is no longer possible, the goal shifts to comfort. Hospice care focuses on quality of remaining time:

Pain Management

This is non-negotiable. No dog should spend their final days in pain. Work with your vet to find effective pain relief—this is not the time to worry about long-term side effects.

- ☐ Multiple medications may be needed
- ☐ Adjust doses as needed—pain management is dynamic
- ☐ Consider complementary approaches: acupuncture, massage, heat therapy

Comfort Measures

Soft bedding: Pressure sores develop quickly in immobile dogs

Temperature control: Aging dogs struggle to regulate body heat

Easy access: Food, water, and bathroom area within reach

Quiet environment: Minimize stress and disturbance

Your presence: The most important comfort of all

Nutritional Support

Appetite often declines at the end. This is natural. The goal becomes offering appealing, easy-to-eat foods rather than nutritional perfection. If they want chicken and rice, give them chicken and rice. If they want ice cream, well—it's not the time for dietary purity.

Assessing Quality of Life

The hardest question: "How do I know when it's time?" There's no perfect answer, but frameworks can help.

The Five Freedoms

Can your dog still experience:

1. **Freedom from hunger and thirst:** Are they eating and drinking adequately?
2. **Freedom from discomfort:** Are they able to rest comfortably?
3. **Freedom from pain, injury, or disease:** Is their pain manageable?
4. **Freedom to express normal behavior:** Can they still do things that bring them joy?
5. **Freedom from fear and distress:** Are they at peace or anxious/distressed?

The Good Days vs. Bad Days

Keep a calendar. Mark good days and bad days. When bad days consistently outnumber good days, it may be time. A common guideline: when there are more bad days than good in a week, quality of life has declined significantly.

The "Favorite Things" Test

Make a list of your dog's five favorite things—greeting you at the door, playing with a toy, their evening walk, treats, their special spot on the couch. When they can no longer enjoy most of these, their essential dog-ness is diminishing.

Questions to Ask

Is my dog still experiencing joy?

Is their suffering manageable?

Am I keeping them alive for them, or for me?

What would my dog choose if they could tell me?

Am I waiting for the "perfect moment" that may not come?

Making the Decision

There is rarely a "right" moment. Most guardians fear acting too soon—but acting too late, allowing unnecessary suffering, is the greater regret.

A wise veterinarian once said: "*Better a week too early than a day too late.*" This doesn't mean rushing—it means not waiting until your dog is in crisis.

Trust yourself. You know your dog better than anyone. If you're reading this chapter seriously, asking these questions, it may already be time to have the conversation with your vet.

Euthanasia: What to Expect

Understanding the process can reduce fear:

The Procedure

6. **Sedation:** Usually given first to ensure deep relaxation and remove any awareness
7. **The final injection:** An overdose of anesthetic that stops the heart. It takes seconds
8. **Passing:** The dog simply falls into deeper sleep and doesn't wake up

It is painless. It is peaceful. It is a release from suffering.

What May Happen

Normal physical responses that can be distressing if unexpected:

- ☐ Eyes may remain open
- ☐ Bladder or bowels may release
- ☐ Muscle twitches may occur
- ☐ A final breath or sigh may happen after the heart stops

These are reflexes, not signs of distress. Your dog is already at peace.

Where

- ☐ **At-home euthanasia:** Increasingly available in Indian metros. Dog passes in familiar surroundings, no stressful car ride. More expensive but often worth it
- ☐ **At the clinic:** Request a quiet room. Bring familiar bedding. Take your time

Should You Be Present?

This is personal. Many feel strongly that they must be there. Others worry they can't handle it.

Consider: your dog may look for you, being there provides comfort in their final moments. Most people who stay say they're glad they did, most who leave wish they had stayed.

If you truly cannot be there, ensure someone your dog knows and trusts is present. They should not be alone.

Afterward

Body Care

Decide in advance:

- ☐ **Cremation:** Individual (ashes returned) or communal
- ☐ **Burial:** Home burial (check local regulations), pet cemetery
- ☐ **Other options:** Memorial diamonds, tree plantings

Grief

Pet loss grief is real and valid. Don't let anyone minimize it with "it was just a dog." This was a family member, a daily companion, a source of unconditional love.

- ☐ Allow yourself to grieve fully
- ☐ Seek support from those who understand
Pet loss support groups exist, including online
- ☐ There is no timeline for healing
- ☐ The grief is the price of the love—and the love was worth it

Chapter 15 Checklist

- Discuss quality of life openly with your vet
- Ensure adequate pain management
- Track good days vs. bad days
- Research at-home euthanasia options in your area
- Decide on aftercare arrangements
- Plan who will be present
- Gather photos, paw prints, fur clippings for memory
- Allow grief its space

When the time comes, you will know. Trust that knowing. Act with courage. And know that choosing a peaceful end over prolonged suffering is the final, greatest gift you can give.

They gave you years of unconditional love. You can give them a moment of unconditional mercy.



End of Part IV

THE SUNSET

The sunset years bring challenges—cognitive changes, physical decline, and ultimately the hardest decision. But they also bring depth of connection, tenderness, and the privilege of caring for those who have given us so much.

What remains is the soul connection—the essence of what binds human and dog across the ages.

PART V

THE SOUL CONNECTION

Beyond the Physical

Focus: The Eternal Bond

CHAPTER XVI: The Spiritual Bond

What Dogs Teach Us About Being Human

"Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole. In their unconditional presence, we find what we've been searching for."

Why Dogs, Why Us?

Somewhere between 15,000 and 40,000 years ago, a wolf approached a human fire. Perhaps it was hunger. Perhaps curiosity. Whatever the reason, it began one of the most remarkable interspecies partnerships in evolutionary history.

Dogs are the only species that have co-evolved *with* us rather than merely *alongside* us. We shaped them, and they shaped us. The bond between human and dog is written into our genes—when we gaze into each other's eyes, both species release oxytocin, the same hormone that bonds mothers to infants.

This isn't just affection. It's biology. It's evolution. It's something that transcends the merely physical.

Dogs in Indian Spiritual Tradition

In India, the spiritual significance of dogs runs deep:

Bhairava and the Dog:

Lord Shiva in his fierce Bhairava form is depicted with a dog as his vahana (vehicle). The dog represents loyalty, guardianship, and the ability to see beyond the physical realm. In tantric traditions, dogs are considered sacred—able to perceive energies invisible to humans.

The Mahabharata and Yudhishtira:

In the final journey of the Pandavas, only Yudhishtira and a stray dog reached the gates of heaven. When told he cannot enter with the dog, Yudhishtira refused to abandon his loyal companion. The dog revealed itself as Dharma—the god of righteousness—and Yudhishtira's loyalty is rewarded. The message: true dharma includes loyalty to all beings, regardless of their status.

Dattatreya's Teachers:

The sage Dattatreya named 24 gurus from whom he learned spiritual lessons—and the dog was one of them. From the dog, he learned the virtues of faithfulness, contentment with little, and vigilant service without expecting reward.

Lessons Dogs Teach

Every day with a dog is a masterclass in what matters:

Presence

Dogs don't ruminate on yesterday or worry about tomorrow. They exist fully in now—the smell of this moment, the person in front of them, the walk they're on. In a world that constantly pulls us into past regrets and future anxieties, dogs model radical presence.

Unconditional Love

Your dog doesn't love you because of your job title, your bank balance, or your accomplishments. They love you in your pajamas at your worst. They love you when you fail. They show us what love looks like without conditions or expectations.

Forgiveness

Step on their tail, and they forgive immediately. Leave them all day, and they greet you with undiminished joy. Dogs don't hold grudges, they don't keep score, they let go in ways we struggle to.

Joy in Simplicity

Aball. Awalk.Yourlap. That's all it takes for complete happiness, dogs remind us that contentment isn't about accumulation—it's about appreciation of what's already here.

Trust

Dogs place their lives in our hands completely. They trust that we will feed them, protect them, care for them. This vulnerability, freely given, is both humbling and instructive.

Authenticity

Dogs don't pretend. When they're happy, you know it. When they're scared, you know it. They are utterly themselves—no masks, no performance, no pretense.

The Therapeutic Bond

Science confirms what we intuitively know—dogs heal us:

- ☐ **Reduced cortisol:** Time with dogs lowers stress hormones
- ☐ **Increased oxytocin:** Petting dogs releases bonding hormones
- ☐ **Lower blood pressure:** Dog owners have better cardiovascular health
- ☐ **Reduced loneliness:** Dogs provide social connection and routine
- ☐ **Increased exercise:** Dog walks keep us moving
- ☐ **Support in crisis:** Dogs sense our emotional states and offer comfort

Dogs are increasingly recognized in therapy settings—for PTSD, autism, depression, and anxiety. They reach people where human therapists cannot.

Deepening the Connection

The soul connection with your dog can be consciously cultivated:

Quality Time Without Agenda

Not just walks for exercise or training for obedience. Time simply being together—sitting on the floor with them, watching them sleep, letting them lead the sniff walk. Presence without purpose.

Silent Communication

Learn their language. The subtle ear positions, the weight shifts, the eye movements. Dogs communicate constantly—we just need to learn to listen with more than our ears.

Touch

Intentional, mindful touch. Not distracted petting while watching TV, but focused attention through your hands. Slow massage. Gentle grooming. Contact that communicates care.

Shared Adventures

New experiences together. Hikes. Beach days. Camping. Novel environments that you explore as partners. These shared adventures build memories and deepen the bond.

Gratitude Practice

Take moments to consciously appreciate your dog. Not just loving them, but actively noticing and feeling grateful for their presence in your life. This shifts your own consciousness as much as it honors theirs.

The Mirror

Dogs often reflect our own inner states. An anxious owner frequently has an anxious dog. A calm owner often has a calm dog. They absorb our energy, mirror our emotions, and sometimes show us things about ourselves we'd rather not see.

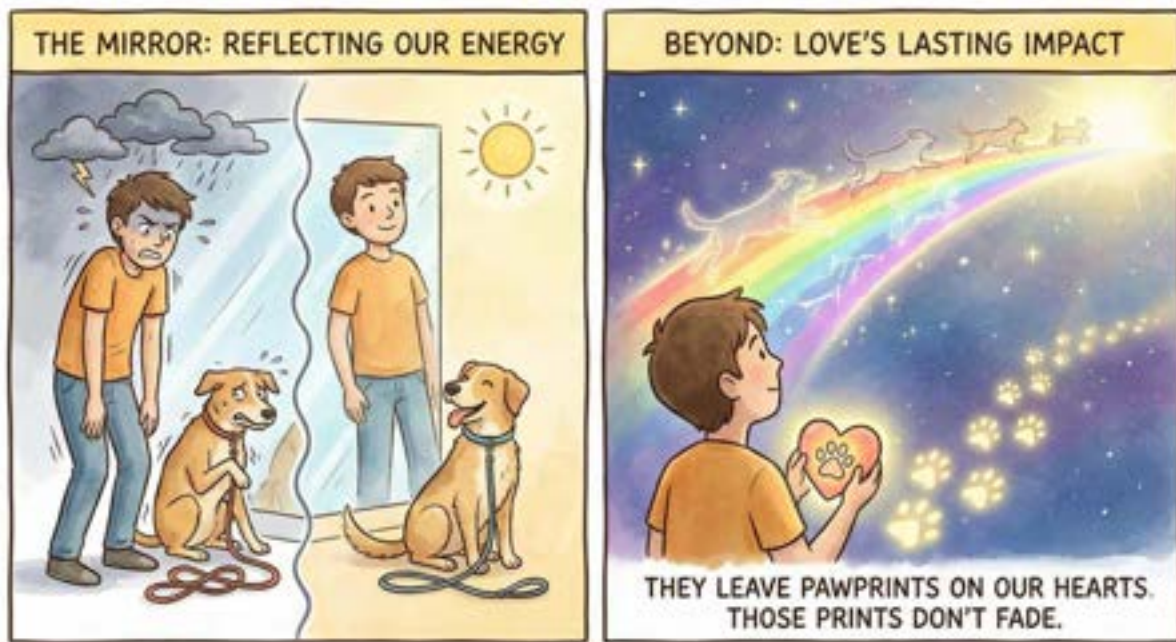
This isn't judgment—it's information. If your dog is chronically stressed, it may be worth examining your own stress. If they're reactive, consider your own reactivity. They can be teachers, pointing us toward our own growth edges.

Beyond This Life

What happens to dogs after they die? Every tradition offers different answers, and no one can know for certain. But this much is true: the love doesn't end.

Whether you believe in a rainbow bridge, reincarnation, a return to cosmic consciousness, or nothing at all—the impact of a beloved dog's life continues. In how they changed you. In the love they taught you to give and receive. In the version of yourself that emerged through caring for them.

They leave pawprints on our hearts. Those prints don't fade.



CHAPTER XVII: Legacy and Moving Forward

Honoring the Past, Embracing the Future

"Grief is the price of love. And the love was worth every moment of the grief."

The Aftermath of Loss

When your dog dies, a part of your daily life disappears. The routines built around them—morning walks, evening cuddles, the click of nails on the floor—suddenly echo with absence. This emptiness is physical, not just emotional.

Give yourself permission to grieve. This was not "just a pet." This was a family member, a companion, a source of unconditional love. The grief you feel is proportional to the love you shared.

The Grief Process

Grief isn't linear. You may feel:

- ☐ **Shock and denial:** Even when expected, the finality feels unreal
- ☐ **Guilt:** "Could I have done more? Did I wait too long? Did I act too soon?"
- ☐ **Anger:** At the disease, at the vet, at the universe
- ☐ **Deep sadness:** Waves that come and go, triggered by small reminders

- ☐ **Eventual peace:** Not forgetting, but integrating—the ability to remember with more love than pain

There is no right timeline. Some need weeks. Some need years. All of it is valid.

Honoring Their Memory

Creating ways to remember can help process grief:

- ☐ **Photo album or digital tribute:** Collect the moments that mattered
- ☐ **Memory box:** Collar, tags, favorite toy, paw print, lock of fur
- ☐ **Plant a tree or garden:** Living memorial that grows
- ☐ **Donate to a cause:** To a rescue, shelter, or veterinary research in their name
- ☐ **Create art:** Commissioned portrait, written tribute, memorial piece
- ☐ **Annual remembrance:** Mark the anniversary in a way that feels meaningful

Other Pets in the Home

If you have other dogs, they will grieve too. They may:

- ☐ Search for their companion
- ☐ Show decreased appetite
- ☐ Become clingy or withdrawn
- ☐ Have sleep disturbances
- ☐ Change behavior or routine

Support them by maintaining routines, giving extra attention, and allowing them to process in their own way. Some benefit from seeing the body; others are confused by it. Watch and respond to the individual.

When to Get Another Dog

This question has no universal answer. Some need to fill the empty space quickly. Others need months or years. Both are valid.

Wait if...

You're looking for a replacement—no dog can replace another
You're still in acute grief and may resent a new dog for not being your old one
You're acting from guilt or emptiness rather than readiness
Other family members aren't ready

Consider sooner if...

- ☐ You understand a new dog is a new relationship, not a replacement
- ☐ Your other dogs would benefit from canine company
- ☐ You have love to give and a home to offer
- ☐ Caring for a new life feels healing rather than betraying

Getting another dog doesn't mean forgetting. Your heart expands—it doesn't transfer.

Carrying the Lessons Forward

Everydogteaches us something. As you move forward, consider:

- ☐ What did this dog teach me about patience?
- ☐ What did they teach me about presence?
- ☐ How did loving them change me?
- ☐ What would I do differently next time?
- ☐ What parts of myself did they bring out?

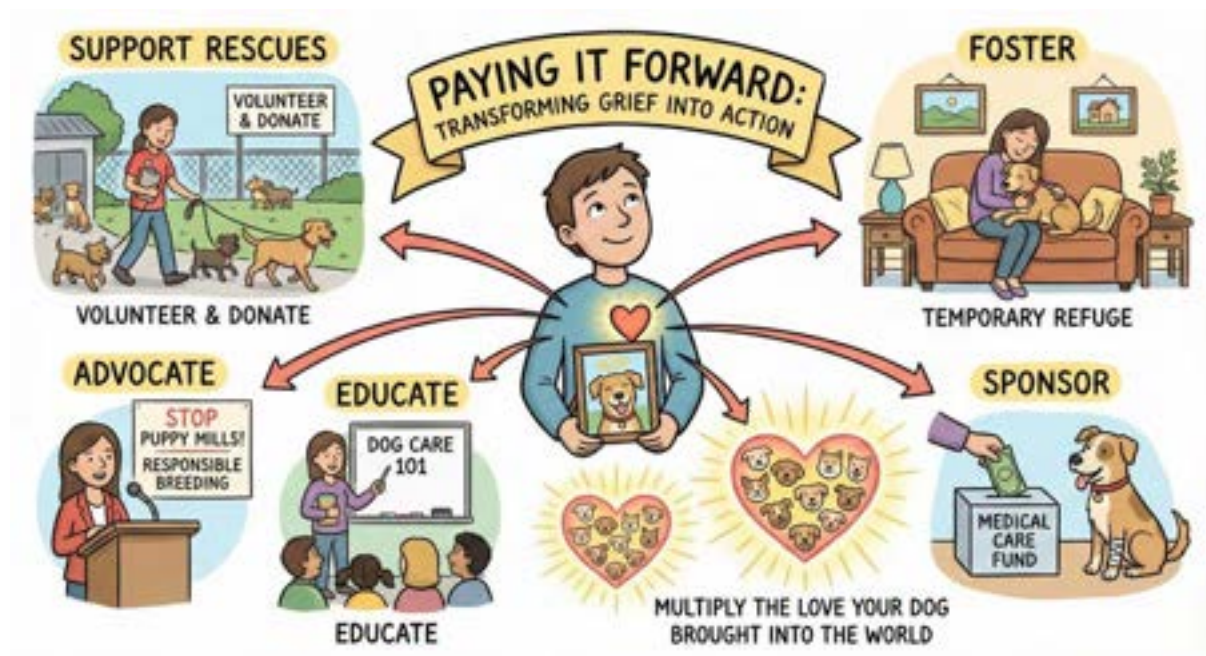
These lessons are their lasting gift. When you bring these insights to your next dog, your lost companion's influence continues.

Paying It Forward

One way to honor a dog's memory is to help other dogs:

- ☐ **Support rescues and shelters:** Volunteer time, donate resources
- ☐ **Foster:** Give homeless dogs temporary refuge
- ☐ **Advocate:** For better treatment of street dogs, against puppy mills, for responsible breeding
- ☐ **Educate:** Share what you've learned with other dog parents
- ☐ **Sponsor:** Medical care, food, or adoption fees for dogs in need

When you transform grief into action, you multiply the love your dog brought into the world.



* * *

EPILOGUE: The Promise

When I started this journey—first as a dog parent bewildered by Demodex, then as a nutrition student, and finally as the founder of The Doggos—I didn't know where it would lead. I only knew that something was wrong with how we were caring for our dogs, and I was determined to find a better way.

What I discovered was both simpler and more profound than I expected.

Simpler, because the answers often circle back to fundamentals: fresh food, clean environments, appropriate exercise, minimal chemicals, respect for biology. These aren't revolutionary ideas—they're ancestral wisdom that got buried under marketing and convenience.

More profound, because implementing these changes required me to rethink my entire relationship with my dogs—and, through them, with life itself.

Dogs are not accessories. They're not status symbols. They're not even just pets. They are beings who have chosen to share their lives with us, who have evolved alongside us, who have something to teach us about presence, loyalty, and unconditional love.

When we treat them accordingly—when we honor their biology, support their health at every stage, and cherish the soul connection they offer—we don't just give them better lives. We become better ourselves.

— — —

The Desi Carnivore Promise

As we close this book, I invite you to make a commitment—to your dogs, and to yourself:

- ☐ **I will see my dog as a whole being**, not a collection of symptoms to suppress.
- ☐ **I will respect their biology**, even when modern convenience pulls me toward shortcuts.
- ☐ **I will ask "why" before accepting any intervention**, whether it comes from a vet, a pet store, or a well-meaning friend.
- ☐ **I will partner with professionals**, not defer to them blindly.
- ☐ **I will adapt my care to each life stage**, understanding that what a puppy needs differs from what a senior requires.
- ☐ **I will prioritize quality of life**, not just quantity of years.
- ☐ **I will be present for the hard moments**, including the final one.
- ☐ **I will honor the gift of their companionship**, every day.

— — —

Your dog looks at you with complete trust. They believe you will protect them, feed them, care for them, and be there when they need you most. They believe this without doubt, without qualification.

May this book help you live up to that trust.

From first breath to golden years, from the chaos of puppyhood to the quiet dignity of old age—may you and your dogs walk this path together with health, joy, and the deep peace that comes from true partnership.

That is my promise. And I hope, now, it is yours.

With love and gratitude,
Mahiv Amit Chhabra
Certified Canine Nutritionist
Founder, The Doggos

THE END

THE DESI CARNIVORE 2
From First Breath to Golden Years

For more resources, recipes, and community support:
www.thedoggos.in

APPENDICES

Practical Resources for the Desi Carnivore Journey

Appendix A

Recipes and Meal Plans

Important Note: These recipes are starting points. For dogs with health conditions or specific needs, consult a certified canine nutritionist for a customized diet plan. Always introduce new foods gradually.

Basic Fresh Food Template

A balanced fresh meal follows this approximate ratio:

Component	Percentage
Muscle meat (chicken, mutton, fish, egg)	70-80%
Organ meat (liver, kidney, heart)	10-15%
Raw meaty bones OR calcium supplement	10-15%
Vegetables (lightly cooked/pureed)	5-10%

Recipe 1: Chicken & Liver Base Meal

Suitable for: Adult dogs, all sizes

Ingredients (for ~500g batch):

- ☐ 350g chicken mince or boneless thigh
50g chicken liver
- ☐ 50g chicken heart (or more liver if unavailable)
- ☐ 30g pumpkin (steamed and mashed)
20g spinach (lightly blanched, chopped)
- ☐ 1 egg with shell (crushed) OR ½ tsp eggshell powder or dehydrated bone
- ☐ 1 tsp hemp oil or sardine
- ☐ Pinch of turmeric + black pepper

Instructions:

1. Lightly cook chicken mince (can be served raw if sourced fresh)
2. Lightly sear liver and heart (pink inside is fine)
3. Mix all ingredients together
4. Add hemp oil and turmeric just before serving
5. Serve at room temperature

Recipe 2: Mutton & Organ Power Bowl

Suitable for: Adult dogs, especially active breeds

Ingredients (for ~500g batch):

- ☐ 300g mutton mince
- ☐ 50g mutton liver
- ☐ 50g mutton kidney
- ☐ 50g raw meaty bone (lamb neck) OR calcium supplement

30g bottle gourd (lauki) - steamed
20g carrot - grated
1 tbsp curd
1 tsp hemp oil

Recipe 3: Fish Friday Feast

Suitable for: All dogs (excellent omega-3 source)

Ingredients:

- ☐ 300g sardines or anchovies (whole small fish with bones)
- ☐ 1 whole egg
 - 50g chicken liver (for variety)
- ☐ 30g sweet potato (mashed)
- ☐ Handful of moringa leaves (chopped)
- ☐ 1 tsp hemp seeds

Note: Small fish like sardines can be fed whole with bones. For larger fish, remove bones or pressure cook until soft.

Recipe 4: Healing Bone Broth

Suitable for: All dogs, especially seniors, those with gut issues, or recovering from illness

Ingredients:

- ☐ 1 kg mixed bones (chicken feet, necks, mutton bones)
 - 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- ☐ Water to cover
- ☐ Optional: turmeric, ginger, baobab

Instructions:

6. Place bones in large pot or slow cooker
7. Cover with water, add apple cider vinegar
8. Simmer for 12-24 hours (slow cooker on low)
9. Strain, discard bones
10. Skim fat layer when cooled (or leave for extra calories)
11. Store in fridge (1 week) or freeze in portions

Usage: Add 2-4 tbsp to meals, or serve warm as a healing drink.

Recipe 5: Puppy Growth Formula

Suitable for: Puppies 8 weeks to 6 months

Ingredients:

- ☐ 300g chicken mince (higher fat content)
- ☐ 50g chicken liver (limit to 5% for puppies)
- ☐ 2 eggs with shells (calcium source)
- ☐ 50g goat milk or curd

- ☐ 30g mashed pumpkin
- ☐ 1 tsp hemp oil
- ☐ Pinch of kelp powder (iodine)

Note: Puppies need more calories per kg bodyweight. Feed 8-10% of body weight daily, divided into 4 meals (8-12 weeks) or 3 meals (3-6 months).

Recipe 6: Senior Support Meal

Suitable for: Dogs 7+ years

Ingredients:

- ☐ 300g fish (sardines/mackerel - brain-supportive omega-3s)
- 50g chicken liver
- 2 eggs (choline for cognitive support)
- 30g blueberries (antioxidants)
- ☐ 30g steamed broccoli
- ☐ 1 tbsp hemp oil
- 2 tbsp bone broth
- ☐ Joint supplement/ Chicken feet (glucosamine/chondroitin)

Note: Seniors may need softer textures. Mince meat finely and mash vegetables well if dental issues exist.

Weekly Meal Rotation Plan

Variety is key. Rotate proteins to prevent sensitivities and ensure nutritional balance:

Day	Morning	Evening
Monday	Chicken + liver	Chicken + egg
Tuesday	Mutton + kidney	Mutton + heart
Wednesday	Fish (sardines)	Chicken + liver
Thursday	Eggs + cottage cheese	Chicken + heart
Friday	Fish (anchovies)	Mutton + liver
Saturday	Chicken + bone broth	Chicken + curd
Sunday	Dehydrated meaty bone day	Light meal + eggs

Indian Superfoods to Add

Turmeric (haldi): ¼ tsp with black pepper and fat for absorption

Ghee: 1 tsp - butyric acid for gut health

Curd/Dahi: 1-2 tbsp - natural probiotics

Hemp oil: 1 tsp – Omega 3

Moringa leaves: Handful chopped - nutrient-dense superfood

Pumpkin seeds: Ground - zinc for skin/coat

Sattu (roasted gram flour): Small amount - cooling in summer

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Appendix B

Supplement Guide

Note: Supplements complement a good diet—they don't replace it. A dog eating a balanced fresh diet needs fewer supplements than one on processed food. Always introduce one supplement at a time to monitor response.

Essential Supplements

Supplement	Purpose	Dosage	Notes
Hemp Oil (Omega-3)	Anti-inflammatory, skin/coat, brain, joints		
Probiotics	Gut health, immune support, digestion	Per product label; 1-10 billion CFU	Multi-strain. Critical after antibiotics
Vitamin E	Antioxidant, partners with fish oil	1-2 IU per kg body weight	Natural (d-alpha) preferred
Calcium	Bone health (if not feeding raw bones)	~1000mg per 500g boneless meat	Eggshell powder: ½ tsp = ~1800mg

Joint Support Supplements

Supplement	Purpose	Dosage	Notes
Glucosamine	Cartilage building block	20mg per kg body weight	Takes 4-6 weeks to show effect
Chondroitin	Joint fluid, shock absorption	Often paired with glucosamine	Best as combination product
Green Lipped Mussel	Natural anti-inflammatory, joint support	15-25mg per kg body weight	Excellent natural option
MSM	Anti-inflammatory, sulfur for joints	50mg per kg body weight	Often in joint combos

Cognitive & Senior Support

Supplement	Purpose	Dosage	Notes
MCT Oil	Brain fuel (ketones), cognitive support	Start ¼ tsp, build to 1 tsp per 10kg	Introduce slowly to avoid loose stool
SAMe	Liver support, cognitive function	18-20mg per kg body weight	Give on empty stomach
CoQ10	Cellular energy, heart & brain health	1mg per kg body weight	Ubiquinol form better absorbed
Phosphatidylserine	Brain cell membrane support	50-100mg daily for medium dogs	Often in senior formulas

Skin & Coat Support

Supplement	Purpose	Dosage	Notes
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Hemp Seed Oil	Omega 3:6 balance, skin health, anxiety	1ml per 5kg body weight	The Doggos Hemp Seed Oil
Baobab Oil (topical)	Hot spots, fungal issues, eczema, dry skin	Apply directly to affected areas	The Doggos Baobab Oil
Zinc	Skin health, immune function	1-2mg per kg (if diet deficient)	Usually adequate in fresh diet
Biotin	Coat quality, nail strength	Per product label	Often in skin/coat combos

Calming & Anxiety Support

Supplement	Purpose	Dosage	Notes
L-Theanine	Calming without sedation	2-4mg per kg body weight	Safe for daily use
CBD Oil	Anxiety, pain, inflammation	0.2-0.5mg per kg, start low	Use hemp-derived, pet-specific
Valerian Root	Mild sedative, anxiety relief	Per product label	Good for situational anxiety
Adaptil (DAP)	Pheromone-based calming	Diffuser, collar, or spray	Non-ingestible option

Supplement Stacks by Life Stage

Puppy(8weeks - 1year):

- ☐ Hemp oil (lower dose)
- ☐ Probiotic (especially during weaning/diet changes)
- ☐ Calcium (if not feeding raw meaty bones)

Adult (1-7 years):

- ☐ Hemp oil
- ☐ Probiotic (periodically or after stress/antibiotics)
- ☐ Joint support (start at 5-6 years for large breeds)

Senior (7+ years):

- ☐ Hemp oil (higher dose)
- ☐ Joint support (glucosamine/chondroitin or GLM)
- ☐ MCT oil
- ☐ CoQ10
- ☐ Probiotic (daily)
- ☐ Consider SAME for liver/cognitive support

* * *

Appendix C

Emergency Protocols

CRITICAL: These protocols are for initial stabilization only. Always seek immediate veterinary care for emergencies. Know the location of your nearest 24-hour emergency vet BEFORE you need it.

Recognizing an Emergency

Seek immediate veterinary care for:

- ☐ Difficulty breathing or choking
- ☐ Severe bleeding that won't stop
- ☐ Suspected poisoning
- ☐ Bloated/distended abdomen with distress
- ☐ Seizures lasting more than 2 minutes
- ☐ Inability to urinate (especially male dogs)
- ☐ Heat stroke (collapse, excessive panting)
- ☐ Trauma (hit by vehicle, fall from height)
- ☐ Pale or blue gums
- ☐ Unconsciousness
- ☐ Eye injuries

Heat Stroke Protocol

Signs: Excessive panting, drooling, red gums, vomiting, staggering, collapse

Immediate Actions:

1. Move to shade/air conditioning immediately
2. Apply cool (NOT ice cold) water to paw pads, groin, armpits
3. Place wet towels on body (replace frequently—they heat up)
4. Offer small amounts of cool water if conscious
5. Fan the dog while wet
6. Transport to vet with AC on full blast

DO NOT: Use ice or ice-cold water (causes blood vessels to constrict, trapping heat).

Do not force water on unconscious dog.

Poisoning Protocol

Common toxins in India: Rat poison, snail bait, chocolate, grapes/raisins, xylitol, medications, cleaning products, certain plants

Immediate Actions:

7. Identify what was ingested and when (keep packaging if possible)
8. Call vet immediately—they will advise on whether to induce vomiting
9. Do NOT induce vomiting unless vet instructs (some substances cause more damage coming back up)
10. Transport to vet immediately

If vet instructs vomiting: 3% hydrogen peroxide (1 tsp per 5kg body weight, max 3 tbsp). Walk dog after administration. Vomiting usually occurs within 10-15 minutes. DO NOT use salt water.

Choking Protocol

Signs: Pawing at mouth, gagging, blue gums, panic, inability to breathe

11. Open mouth and look for visible obstruction
12. If visible, try to remove with fingers (be careful not to push deeper)
13. If not visible or can't remove: Heimlich maneuver
 - ☐ Small dog: Hold upside down by hips, shake gently
 - ☐ Large dog: Stand behind, arms around abdomen, quick upward thrusts just behind rib cage
14. Seek vet care even if object dislodged (check for internal damage)

Bleeding/Wound Care

15. Apply direct pressure with clean cloth
16. Elevate wound above heart if possible
17. If bleeding through cloth, add more—don't remove first layer
18. For limb wounds: tourniquet only as last resort, release every 10-15 min
19. Transport to vet while maintaining pressure

Seizure Protocol

20. Clear area of objects that could cause injury
21. Do NOT put hands near mouth
22. Time the seizure
23. Dim lights, reduce noise
24. After seizure ends, keep dog calm and quiet
25. Seek vet if: first seizure, lasts >2 minutes, multiple seizures, doesn't recover normally

Bloat (GDV) Protocol

THIS IS LIFE-THREATENING. MINUTES MATTER.

Signs: Distended abdomen, unproductive retching, restlessness, pacing, drooling, rapid breathing

26. Do not wait to see if it improves
27. Transport to emergency vet IMMEDIATELY
28. Call ahead so they can prepare
29. Surgery is usually required within 1-2 hours

Tick Fever Signs (India-Specific)

Warning signs requiring immediate vet visit:

- ☐ High fever (>103°F / 39.4°C)
- ☐ Pale or yellow gums
- Lethargy, loss of appetite

- ☐ Dark or bloody urine
- ☐ Bruising or unexplained bleeding
- ☐ Enlarged lymph nodes

Action: Request tick panel blood test. Early treatment saves lives.

Emergency Kit Essentials

Gauze pads and rolls
Adhesive tape (medical)
Scissors (blunt-tipped)
Tweezers (for tick removal)
Digital thermometer
3% hydrogen peroxide (for induced vomiting only when directed)
Saline solution (for flushing wounds/eyes)
Antiseptic wipes
Disposable gloves
Muzzle (dogs in pain may bite)
Emergency vet contact numbers
Copy of vaccination records

Appendix D

Resource Directory

The Doggos Products

Website: www.thedoggos.in

Product Range:

- ☐ **Baobab Oil:** For fungal infections, hot spots, eczema, dry skin
- ☐ **Hemp Seed Oil:** Omega fatty acids for skin, coat, anxiety support
- ☐ **Hemp Meal Balancer:** Complete nutritional supplement
- ☐ **Dehydrated Treats:** Single-ingredient chicken feet, sardines, mutton trotters, anchovies
- ☐ **Peanut Butter:** Natural, no additives

Recommended Reading

The Forever Dog by Rodney Habib & Dr. Karen Becker
Raw and Natural Nutrition for Dogs by Lew Olson
The Canine Thyroid Epidemic by W. Jean Dodds
Don't Shoot the Dog by Karen Pryor (training)
The Other End of the Leash by Patricia McConnell

Research Resources

DogAgingProject: dogagingproject.org

WSAVA Vaccination Guidelines: wsava.org

DogRisk Research: University of Helsinki canine nutrition studies

Dr. Jan Suchodolski's work: Texas A&M microbiome research

Finding Professionals in India

Canine Nutritionists:

- ☐ Look for certification from recognized programs (DNM, ACVN, or equivalent)

Holistic/Integrative Vets:

- ☐ Growing presence in major metros
- ☐ Ask about their approach to nutrition, vaccination protocols, minimal intervention philosophy

Positive Reinforcement Trainers:

- ☐ Look for force-free, science-based methodology

Sourcing Fresh Food in India

Local butchers: Best source for fresh meat, organs, bones. Build relationship for consistent supply

Chicken shops: Request liver, heart, feet, necks (often discarded/sold cheap)

Fish markets: Sardines, mackerel, small fish with bones

Online pet food suppliers: Growing options for pre-made fresh food

Vegetable vendors: Pumpkin, spinach, carrots, bottle gourd

The Doggos : Dehydrated treats and supplements

Community Support

The Doggos Community: Follow on Instagram @thedoggos.in

Fresh feeding groups: Search for India-specific Fresh food feeding communities on Facebook

Breed-specific groups: For breed-specific health and nutrition guidance

Emergency Contacts Template

Fill this in and keep accessible:

Primary Vet	
24-Hour Emergency Vet	
Poison Helpline	
Canine Nutritionist	
Pet Insurance Policy #	

— Thank you for reading —
THE DESI CARNIVORE 2

www.thedoggos.in

