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Gastro-intestinal diets

Gastro-intestinal (GI) diets can be used for a variety of issues from simple upset stomachs to chronic issues like pancreatitis. The most common time they are used in practice is for post-operative feeding.

Why not use 'bland food'

A lot of the time when our pets have an upset or sensitive stomach, we will talk about feeding bland food. Most people have fed their pet a few meals of chicken and rice at one time or another. However bland food may not always be the most suitable option.

While bland foods are easy to digest, they are often not balanced. This means they don't have everything that your dog or cat needs. Bland foods are also not always highly digestible. This means while they are gentle on the stomach and digestive system to break down, our pets don't always absorb as many nutrients as they would compared to using a gastro-intestinal/highly digestible diet.

What is in gastro-intestinal diets?

Gastro-intestinal diets are often highly digestible and gentle on the digestive tract. They also usually have additional benefits that help to look after and restore the digestive tract. These include

- **Soluble fibres.** Soluble fibre helps with gut motility to ensure that the digestive tract is moving normally. They are also prebiotics - prebiotics help to provide nourishment for the gut's natural bacteria.
- **Probiotics.** Probiotics often contain short living bacteria that usually live in the digestive tract. They help to replace any lost through symptoms such as diarrhoea until the body can recreate its own natural biome.
- **Omega 3 fatty acids.** Omega 3 fatty acids work as an all-round anti-inflammatory. They can also help look after the coat and skin which are sometimes compromised with chronic digestive issues.
- **'Superfoods'.** Foods such as ginger can often be added to gastro-intestinal foods. These can have an anti-inflammatory effect and help with things such as nausea (feeling sick).
- **Electrolytes and B vitamins.** Gastro-intestinal food will often contain electrolytes to help rebalance the body after symptoms like vomiting and

diarrhoea. They will also contain more B vitamins. When the digestive tract is unwell it can often be difficult for it to absorb B vitamins, by adding more into the diet it improves the levels absorbed.

There are several diets available that are suitable for long-term and short-term gastro-intestinal issues. There are currently the following diets available:

- Hills I/d and gastrointestinal ranges
- Royal Canin gastrointestinal range
- Virbac HPM GI digestive care range
- Purina proplan EN gastrointestinal range
- Dechra specific digestive support.

At Greenbay we currently stock the Virbac HPM range. Other diets may be available to order. Please ask one of our team for further information.

How long should I feed a gastro-intestinal diet?

Some illnesses or digestive issues may require a permanent change to a gastro-intestinal diet. Your vet will likely provide further advice on this based on your pet's needs.

For problems such as diarrhoea or stomach upsets it is usually recommended to feed a gastrointestinal diet until a few days after symptoms have resolved. It is then recommended to transition your pet back to their normal diet over a period of days.

We will also recommend the use of gastro-intestinal diets after surgery or anaesthesia. This is because it helps you pet recover from their short period of starvation and prevent stomach upsets post anaesthesia. For these situations it is usually recommend to feed a gastro-intestinal diet for 24-48 hours.

For further information please speak to a member of our team.