

Food and Water

Do NOT follow the feeding instructions on the back of the bag! If you do, your dog will be fat and it will be the beginning of all sorts of health problems including possibly hip dysplasia.

Feed the pups any large puppy breed dog food from the "Whole Dog Journals" list of approved foods which is posted on my website.

You can rotate 4-5 appropriate large breed puppy foods. This is outlined in a separate food article on my website. Always make sure the calcium to phosphorus ratio is between 1:1 and 1.3:1. Do not exceed this ratio until the puppy is done growing, usually between 12 and 15 months. Then switch to a premium food on the Whole Dog Journals approved foods list and continue the rotation diet.

If you feed the same dog food brand and recipe for your puppy's lifetime, they will certainly become deficient in something which isn't healthy. So pick 4 to 5 favorites from the Whole Dog Journals recommended foods and rotate them. Change recipes every bag or two. They can be the same brand only different recipes or completely different brands. I prefer different brands but either way is okay.

A premium food will appear to cost more, but in the long run you will save on vet bills (because your pup will be healthier). Also, you won't have to feed as much with a premium food because there aren't any fillers; just good nutrition. You'll have fewer stools and since they're harder it makes the icky job of poop scooping better. You won't find a premium food at the grocery store, Wal-Mart or Target. You'll have to find it at a pet supply store or online and have it shipped.

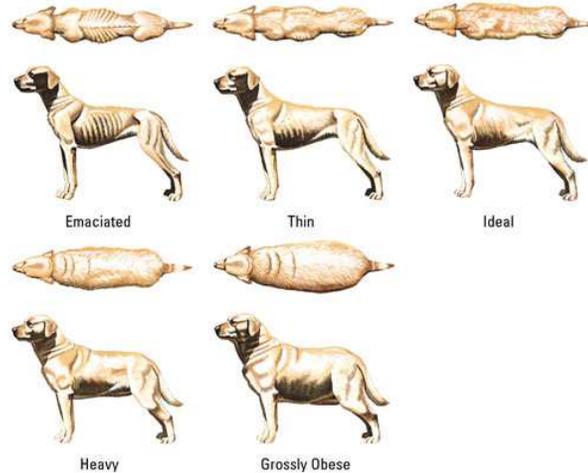
When your pup goes home, he/she will be eating $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of Wellness Large Breed Puppy Food, 3 times a day. Cover it with warm tap water and let it soak for a bit. This softens the food and releases more of the flavor. Give the puppy 10 to 20 minutes to eat. If they do not eat, or only eat a portion, pick up the food and throw it away (don't save it for the next meal). This will teach your puppy good eating habits and most important aids in housebreaking!

Your puppy may not eat well the first few days because it will not have the competition of its littermates to remind him that it's time to eat. Don't worry. Your puppy won't starve and will begin eating full meals in a few days.

Never allow your puppy (or as he/she becomes an adult dog) to free feed; always measure portions. *"Any excess food is first used for growth. That is, even if he is getting too much food, the pup will not get fat -- he will simply grow faster. By the time a pup actually looks or feels fat, he is already at an extreme and growing far too rapidly"* - excerpt from Rhonda Hovan's slow growth plan article.

Golden Retrievers always think they are starving and will gorge if they are left with a choice. That's why there are so many overweight Golden Retrievers. Even as adults, my females only need 1 ½ to 2 cups of premium food twice a day, and my males get 2 to 2 ½ cups twice a day. That is plenty, and they are very happy and healthy. Don't forget to add water to completely cover their food. Start this in a couple of months when the adult teeth come in. You don't have to let the food soak at that point. Dogs need to eat foods that are 60% water in order to keep the kidneys flushing and to maintain good health.

The best way to monitor weight is by touch. When standing over your dog, lightly, but firmly run your fingers down his/her rib cage. You should be able to feel the ribs, but not see them. The spine shouldn't be protruding without a bit of fat around it. When looking at you dog, he/she should have a nice waist line. There should be a definite indent (curve) when looking down at his/her waist .



As your puppy grows older remember to increase his/her food. When your puppy finishes their meal quickly and is looking for more, add another ¼ cup to each meal. If feeding three times a day does not fit into your schedule, you can go to twice a day any time after 10 weeks.

It is critical that your puppy be more thin than overweight. Added weight only opens the door for problems with growing bones, including hip dysplasia, osteochondritis of the shoulder, and a host of other orthopedic problems. Your puppy should remain thin for the first two years of its life. They will add bulk and width with age, not with help of more food. Then in his/her adult years, they should still be on the leaner side as opposed to carrying excess weight.

Just like humans that are fit and lean, your dog will feel better, look better and be healthier. An adult Golden female should weigh between 55 and 65 pounds. An adult male should weigh between 70 and 80 pounds.

Controlling weight is a very important thing as excess weight leads to hip and joint problems.

Water should always be available, except if you are still house breaking; then follow the rules in the house breaking section. Golden love to play in their water bowls and buckets (they like to stick their feet in it and dig in the water). Indoor bowls should be placed where it would be easy to clean up if spilled. Outdoor buckets should be attached to something like fencing to keep it from getting knocked over. This is especially important during the hot summer months when dogs need lots of water.



Non-tip stainless steel bowl



Flat-sided stainless steel pail for outside



Double-ended snap hook

I'm not a fan of plastic food or water dishes. Many dogs react to the plastic and get rashes around their mouths. Also, with a plastic dish, a Golden will first eat the meal then carry off the dish and eat it (which isn't good for digestion). I like stainless steel food and water dishes. They clean up easily.

Keep the food bowl on the floor, not in a raised food dish. If you have a dog that eats way too fast, you'll need to get one of those dishes that slows him down. Bloating is dangerous. It is a silent and swift killer. Always be watching for it during the life of your dog. An article and short video of an Akita bloating is posted on my website. It isn't pleasant to watch, but the Akita survives. If you don't watch it, you won't know what to look for and your puppy/dog may not be as lucky.