

yield more potatoes but that planting a cooked potato just yields rot.

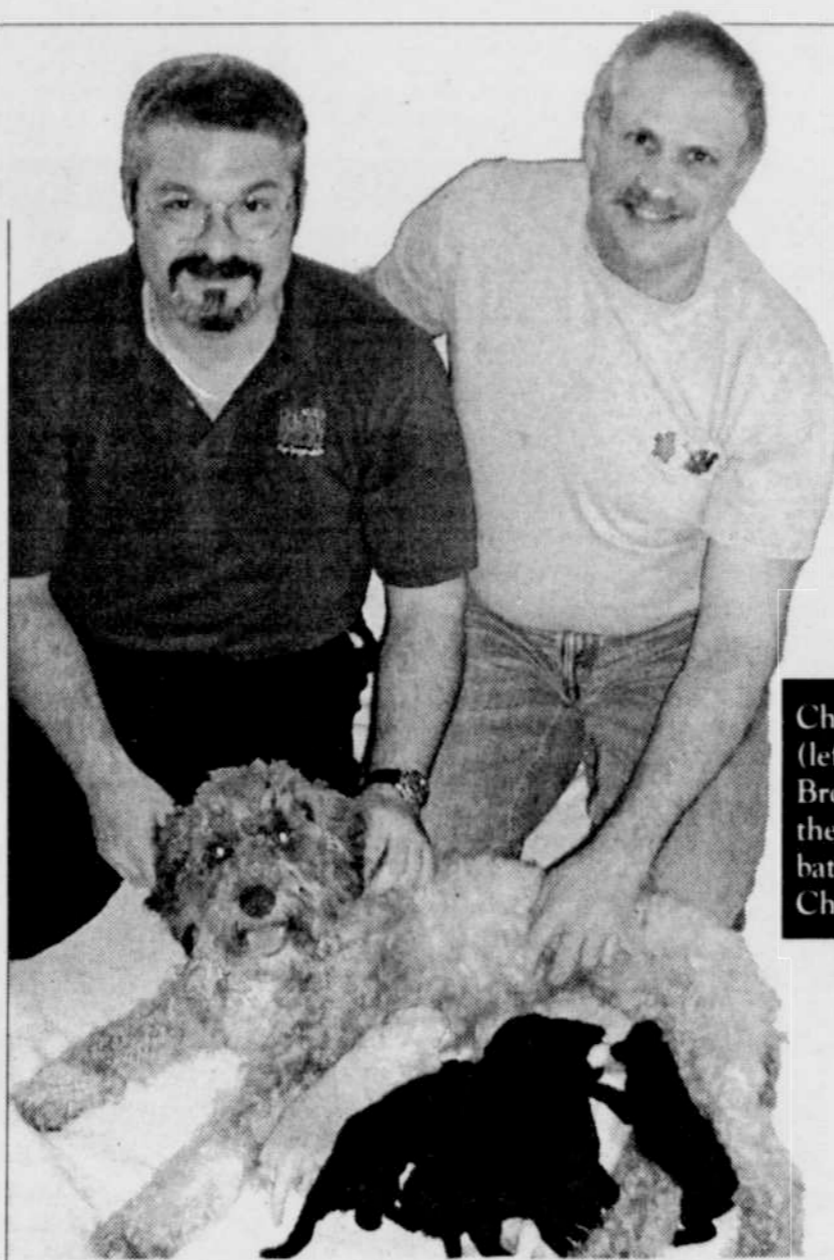
Riveri Farm, a Canadian breeder of champion German shepherds, began using the natural diet expounded by Pitcairn in 1989. In Canada, where pet food standards are not regulated by the government, this breeder felt it was essential to know exactly what the animals were eating. According to breeder Don Hagel, "Processed, devitalized food creates disease, while energetic live natural food offers life and optimum health."

Years later, he tried one of the first "natural brands" of commercial dry dog food. "Thinking this would be an easier way to feed 'natural,' we abandoned raw whole foods and fed commercial products for several years. It came to an end when the overall health of our dogs declined. During this time, we had battled with immune mediated arthritis, hip dysplasia in several dogs, intestinal disorders, reproductive failures, countless skin and ear problems, poor appetites and bad teeth."

Once the dogs were back on raw food, the health problems vanished. Hagel points out specific benefits: "A raw meat diet prevents the formation of plaque on the teeth, and the high acidity of the oral cavity destroys any harmful bacteria before they have a chance to contribute to periodontal disease, which has become almost epidemic in our dogs today and plays a major role in the creation of ill health in our pets."

As a holistic practitioner, Judkins sees two diverse groups of clients: those who have sick pets and have given up on Western veterinary medicine and those who are already on the natural food truck wagon and come to him for preventive care. "I get a select cross section of people who've run out of options. I see a lot of animals with cancer," he says quietly.

And what about his raw food-eating patients—are they healthier? "Absolutely. The animals thrive," he says, the enthusiasm returning to his voice. "I see lots of cats 20 or more years old and dogs that are 18. I do a lot of geriatric medicine now. I have dogs that come in once a month for acupuncture to keep



Chris Gelalich (left), Steve Brown and their latest batch of Charlee Bears

For cats he thinks the best approach is to feed chunks of various raw meats—which is good for their teeth—combined with Instincts, "a mix of nutrients you add with water," he explains.

Fast food that's good for them

If you don't see yourself whipping up Chihuahua chow or feline feasts anytime soon, Steve Brown and Chris Gelalich offer an alternative. Steve's Real Food is the bright idea of these life partners who saw a need and filled it.

Initially, Brown's research into canine genetics was as a breeder, beginning 18 years ago when he and his partner decided to develop their ideal dog, which they've named the Charlee Bear. "If what I want isn't there I'll make it," he says, and he clearly means it. "I'm a dog guy, and I wanted a medium-sized [30-pound] nonshedding dog whose only purpose was to give and receive love." That joy-filled mission accomplished, in 1991 he turned to creating a better dog training treat, something low in calories that could be eaten quickly.

Named for his beloved best friends, Charlee Bear Dog Treats are now the official treat of the American Dog Training Association. "The treats use fresh liver, and we found a manufacturer that would use refrigeration and make them that way."

Although he no longer is involved with the company, during the introduction of the product Brown and his dog Zack visited 250 PetSmart stores. "We met thousands of dogs with health problems and allergies," he recalls, noting that was the impetus for his next project.

His original theory was that lack of diet variety was the problem, so Brown set out to create a better dog food. Under the auspices of PetSmart he toured pet food companies and learned

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TASTE TRIAL RESULTS

All the dogs hound their keepers for more!

Bullet, a 2-year-old Great Dane weighing in at 140 pounds, went wild for Steve's Real Food while it was still frozen. Because of his size, only 25 percent Steve's Real Food was mixed into his regular Eukanuba dry food.

Still, whenever he goes into the kitchen, he sticks his head in the refrigerator and whines for more Steve's Real Food. One of his two dads noted, "He's less aggressive now toward the smaller dogs."

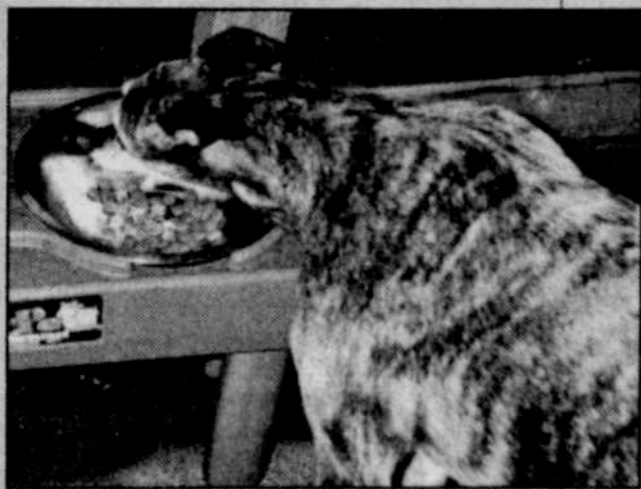
Those "smaller" dogs are Katie, a 6-year-old, 120-pound long-haired Rottweiler, and Duchess, a 9-year-old, 67-pound greyhound. Because of their size, they have also been on the 25 percent Steve's Real Food plan. Duchess, who has a thyroid disorder and is on medication to increase her sociability, has shown the most improvement.

"She's never eaten all her food before; she might not eat at all for three or four days, but on this diet she always eats. Even on days when she's feeling less sociable, she still eats her food," her master observed, adding she's even become the alpha dog of the pack!

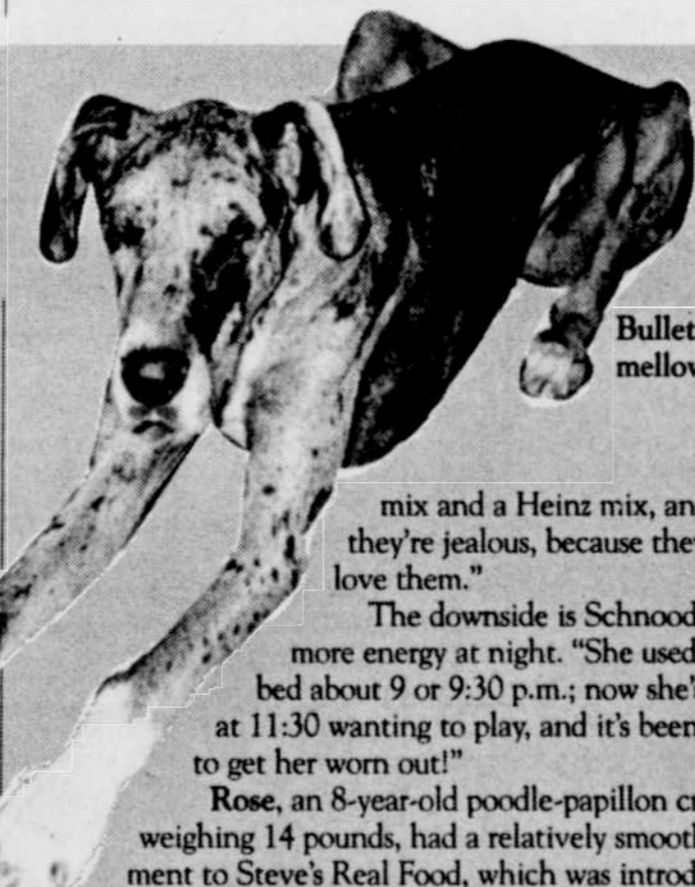
"I haven't seen any dandruff on Duchess lately, and it used to be really bad. Plus all three dogs are shedding less," the fastidious fellow reported. And all three dogs enjoyed all three flavors: beef, chicken and turkey.

Schnoodle is a 14-month-old poodle-schnauzer cross who tips the scales at a dozen pounds and previously ate only Innova dry food. She tried the beef and chicken flavors thoroughly defrosted and loved them.

Her person said: "She also likes them frozen as a treat. I also tried them as treats on the other dogs in the household, a chow



Duchess has a better appetite



Bullet has mellowed out

mix and a Heinz mix, and now they're jealous, because they also love them."

The downside is Schnoodle has more energy at night. "She used to go to bed about 9 or 9:30 p.m.; now she's still up at 11:30 wanting to play, and it's been difficult to get her worn out!"

Rose, an 8-year-old poodle-papillon cross weighing 14 pounds, had a relatively smooth adjustment to Steve's Real Food, which was introduced gradually to her regular raw home-cooked food. She didn't tolerate it cold, though, so it was always warmed up in a plastic bag immersed in hot water.

On the first day she picked out the Steve's Real Food cubes and ate those first.

Just like humans, dogs' digestive systems can have sensitivities to certain foods, which is why she rejected the beef flavor entirely. She wolfed down the other two flavors, however, in about 30 seconds flat.

During the adjustment period she did have two episodes of unscheduled, urgent indoor pooping—something she had never done before—but she seems to be over that. Rose's coat is softer than ever, and she's been more lively.



Schnoodle's become a night owl



Katie enjoys fine dining