

NORTHWEST LAGOTTO

The Nutrition Quick Reference

What to feed, when, and how much.

Feeding schedules from eight weeks through adulthood, the food we recommend and why, and the safe way to switch foods if you decide to.

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FOREWORD

What to feed and how

Three rules that govern every feeding decision.

This is the feeding reference we wrote because the questions we get most often in the first month are about food — when, how much, what brand, what to do if she suddenly refuses dinner. The schedule on the next page is what works for the breed at each developmental stage. The food recommendation a page later is what we feed in our kennel and why. The transition guide at the back is for buyers who decide to switch — which is fine, provided it is done correctly.

WHAT WE FEED AND WHAT COMES HOME WITH HER

Every Northwest Lagotto puppy goes home with a bag of the food she has been eating since weaning, sufficient for the first week or two. She has been on this food long enough that she eats it without question; she will continue to eat it without question if you do not change it.

If you choose to keep her on it, the brand is widely available at North American retailers and online — current details are in your pickup binder. If you choose to switch, the transition guide on the closing page tells you how to do it without producing the digestive upset that an abrupt switch typically causes.

THREE RULES

- 1. Same food, same schedule, for the first two weeks.** Pickup is already a great deal of change. Adding a food change on top of it is the most common cause of first-week digestive issues. If you intend to switch, wait until week three.
- 2. Measure every meal.** Free-feeding the breed produces a Lagotto who grazes rather than eats — which means you cannot tell whether her appetite is a useful diagnostic signal. Measure each meal, set it down, lift it after fifteen minutes whether or not she has finished. Within a week she will eat what is offered when it is offered.
- 3. Track weight, not portion.** The portion guide on the next page is a starting point. Adjust based on body condition — you should be able to feel her ribs without seeing them, and her waist should be visible from above. If she is becoming roly, reduce by ten per cent. If her ribs are showing, increase by ten per cent.

THE SCHEDULE

Feeding by age

From pickup through adulthood — meals per day, portions, notes.

The table on this page is the feeding schedule from pickup through adulthood. Portion ranges are starting points — adjust based on body condition and activity level. The breed runs lean by default; visible ribs are a sign you should increase, not a goal.

Age	Meals/day	Portion guide	Notes
8–12 weeks	4	1/4 to 1/3 cup per meal	Pickup age. Four meals through twelve weeks supports the rapid early growth phase.
12–16 weeks	3	1/3 to 1/2 cup per meal	Drop the late-morning meal. Three meals from twelve weeks through about four months.
4–6 months	3	1/2 to 2/3 cup per meal	Continue three meals through six months. Adolescent appetite spikes are normal.
6–12 months	2	3/4 to 1 cup per meal	Drop to twice daily at six months. Adult-style schedule, growing-puppy portions.
12+ months	2	3/4 to 1 1/4 cup per meal	Adult portions vary widely with activity. A lean working dog needs more than a city companion.

NOTES

Treats and training rewards	Count toward total daily intake. The rule we recommend: ten per cent of the day's calories from treats, ninety per cent from balanced food. A heavy training week may justify a slightly smaller dinner.
Water	Always available, refilled twice daily, in stainless. After swimming or vigorous exercise, water before food — never the other way around.
Skipping a meal	An occasional skipped meal is not a concern, particularly during adolescence (six to ten months). A skipped meal accompanied by lethargy or any other symptom is — see the First Forty-Eight Hours triage page.

THE FOOD

What we feed, and why

Six criteria that govern any food, not just ours.

We have fed multiple brands across more than a decade of breeding and our current default is Royal Canin Medium Puppy through the first year, transitioning to Royal Canin Medium Adult thereafter. The reasoning below is what specifically we look for in a Lagotto puppy food — and it applies to any brand you might consider, not just to ours.

Protein, 26 – 30 per cent	Within the range that supports lean muscle development without accelerating growth. The breed is medium-sized and grows for ten to fourteen months; a food that pushes growth too fast contributes to skeletal issues we want to avoid. Below 26 per cent is too lean for the breed; above 30 per cent is the energy density of a working dog's adult food, not a puppy formula.
Fat, 14 – 18 per cent	Adequate to support the growing coat and the breed's skin demands without contributing to weight gain. Lagotto skin is moderately sensitive — adequate fat in the diet visibly affects coat quality.
Calcium and phosphorus in balance	Calcium between 1.0 and 1.4 per cent; phosphorus between 0.8 and 1.1 per cent; ratio between 1.1:1 and 1.4:1. Imbalanced calcium during the growth phase is the most common dietary contributor to skeletal problems. Any reputable medium-breed puppy food will meet this; verify it on any food you consider.
Specific medium-breed formula, not large- or small-breed	Large-breed puppy formulas are protein- and calcium-restricted to slow growth in big dogs — appropriate for a Bernese, inappropriate for a Lagotto. Small-breed formulas are calorie-dense and sized for tiny mouths. The medium-breed formula is the right choice; it is not interchangeable.
AAFCO statement of nutritional adequacy	Look for the line on the bag stating the food is formulated to meet the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles for puppy growth. Foods without an AAFCO statement may not be complete and balanced. This is the most basic threshold; anything below it is not a candidate.
First ingredient, named meat	"Chicken," "Lamb," "Salmon" — not "meat by-products," "poultry meal," or unspecified "animal protein." Named, identifiable proteins are the floor for a quality food.

THE TRANSITION

How to switch foods safely

Seven to ten days. The standard veterinary protocol.

If you decide to switch foods — and many families do at some point — the transition needs to happen gradually, over seven to ten days. An abrupt switch is the most common cause of vomiting and diarrhoea in an otherwise-healthy puppy, and the digestive upset is entirely preventable. The schedule below is the standard veterinary protocol.

Window	Mix	What to watch
Days 1–2	75% old, 25% new	Mix at each meal. Watch the first stool — if normal, proceed.
Days 3–4	50% old, 50% new	Continue mixed feeding. Stool quality should remain firm and well-formed.
Days 5–6	25% old, 75% new	Approaching full transition. Most puppies show no symptoms at this stage.
Days 7+	100% new	Complete transition. Watch for any digestive change in the following week.

IF SHE DEVELOPS DIGESTIVE UPSET DURING THE TRANSITION

Slow down. Drop back to the previous step for an additional two to three days, then proceed. If she develops persistent diarrhoea, vomiting, or visibly loses interest in the food, stop the transition and return to the old food entirely — and then either try a different new food or contact your veterinarian. Some puppies have specific protein intolerances; trial-and-error within reason is fine, but more than two failed transitions warrants a conversation with your vet rather than a third attempt.

We are happy to discuss alternative foods at any time. If you are considering raw, fresh-cooked, or any less-conventional approach, we want to hear about it before you switch — there are good options and bad ones in each category, and a conversation in advance saves a great deal of trial-and-error.