

# Puppy Love

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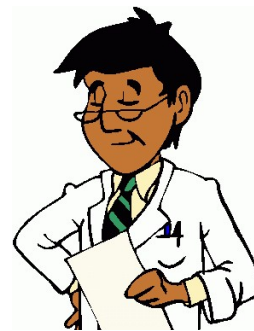
## Is It an Appetizer or a Dessert?

This is an age old question ~ just exactly what is it about grass that appeals to dogs. Researchers have studied this phenomena, technically called PICA, and have determined there is no concrete explanation for this behavior. To put it simply, PICA is an appetite for non-food substances or items that have no nutritional value to the consumer. Some believe grass-eating is an evolutionary trait leftover from the days when dogs were opportunistic scavengers and ate their entire prey, including animals with a stomach full of grass. Another common belief is that dogs are bored and they just do it to pass the time when they are relaxing outside. Others believe it is a form of self-medication to sooth an upset stomach. This explanation is going out of favor because research shows only 10% of dogs show any signs of illness before they eat grass. This assumption probably took precedence because some dogs vomit after eating grass, this routinely happens to less than 25% of dogs. Probably the simplest explanation is that some dogs just like the taste or texture from the experience of eating grass. Some dogs make grass eating part of their daily routine. The answer is neither, he is just doing a dog thing.



## Cow verses Dog

Clearly your little doxie is not a cow, but why can a cow nutritionally benefit from grass while a dog cannot. A cow is a ruminant animal with a complex digestive system that enables him to break down the tough cellulous fibers found in grass. When a cow intakes grass he swallows it whole then regurgitates the grass and begins the process of actually chewing the grass into cud. 85% of a cow's diet consist of grass and his stomach can hold fifty gallons of grass at one time. Surprisingly, a dog can also regurgitate his food in the digestion process, but his digestive system is unable to breakdown the cellulous fibers found in grass.



## And the Doctor Says...

Most experts agree that grazing isn't harmful, but it is important to remember that herbicides and pesticides used on lawns can be toxic. Additionally, a number of common house and garden plants are toxic and can be dangerous if your dog munches on them along with the lawn. To make sure plants in and around the area where your dog is eating grass aren't dangerous check the ASPCA's website for a list of toxic plants. If you suspect your little doxie is suffering from poisoning caused by plants or lawn treatments call the *Animal Poison Control Hotline*:

**888-426-4435.**



"I know it's unconventional, but there's only so much homework one dog can eat."