

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION FOR SENIOR DOGS

The nutritional requirements of older dogs differ in amount rather than in *type* from those of younger dogs. The same nutrients are required, but in different amounts. One of the effects of aging is a slowing down in the metabolic rate the speed at which the body “burns” food for energy. The older dog typically needs fewer calories due to a decrease in activity. During the last third of a dog’s life span, it usually requires 10-30% fewer calories. The amount of reduction will be influenced by such variables as breed, living habits, and general physical condition.

Another change brought on by aging is a reduction of the functional capacity of body organs such as the heart, kidneys, and digestive system. As the digestive processes become less efficient, it is important that the ingredients in the older dog’s diet be of a high biological quality that is easily digested and utilized by the body.

This is the type of technical information known and used by scientists in the formulation of the higher quality pet foods. With these foods, the products are backed and proven by many years of research and testing. In pet foods, you really do usually get what you pay for. Quality pet foods do **NOT** use cheap ingredients and therefore are more expensive to make than the generic foods available.

Commercial foods labeled “complete” or “balanced” are carefully formulated to support the dog throughout adult life. The vitamins and minerals that fortify high quality dog foods work together to provide for a balanced diet.

It is best to feed a high quality food and nothing else unless recommended by your veterinarian because of special needs of the pet. There are circumstances that sometimes require a prescription diet to be recommended. In some conditions, your veterinarian may recommend specific supplements for the diet. Supplementation should be done under medical guidance only since adding supplements can create an unbalanced diet, which may be harmful to the dog.

WATER:

An essential nutrient, and your dog should have free access to water at all times. Change it often. Abrupt water changes can cause digestive upsets. When you go on trips or outings with your dog, be sure to take a supply of water with you. Offer it frequently.

OBESITY:

Obesity is the most common problems in dogs. Potentially it has serious health implications for older dogs. Extra poundage puts a heavy burden on the heart, the lungs, the joints and muscles, and many other organs of the body. It lowers the dog’s resistance to disease and stress, makes it a poor surgical risk, and reduces life expectancy.

Obesity is the body uses the result of the consumption of more calories than. It simply is the result of too much food and not enough exercise. The aging dog is especially prone to obesity as it becomes less active and the metabolic rate slows. You’ll need to be his “weight watcher,” and the time to begin is *before* the pounds start adding up.

The first sign of a weight gain, give smaller portions of food to your animal's meals. Eliminate all table scraps, between-meal snacks and tidbit these little indulgences can add pounds very quickly. Gradually increase playtime and exercise routines, but don’t over do it! Get in the habit of weighing your dog every month.



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Weight loss is difficult. Once those pounds have been put on, it's hard to get them off—but it must be done for the sake of your dog's health. You must stick to the weight reduction plan from your veterinarian. It won't be easy because of those pleading eyes and pathetic whimpers, but in time those hunger pangs will be lessened as it becomes accustomed to less food. Try to keep your dog away from the tempting odors of the kitchen and dining room at mealtime. See that he has plenty of fresh water and give him lots of loving support. Weight reduction is very slow. It may take several months before your pet reaches its goal. But once those extra pounds are shed, it will look better, move more easily, and get more fun out of life.



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