

Let's discuss the benefits of a healthy pet food diet.

Many of these high quality diets contain vitamins and minerals that the majority of pets thrive on. However, each pet, like us is an individual and may require a "little something extra" in their diets. In this article I will discuss some of the beneficial vitamin and mineral supplements available and when they may be needed.

Excess shedding and scratchy skin are the common issues seen in pets today. Many pet foods do not contain high enough levels of essential fatty acids. Essential fatty acids, such as omega 3 promote a healthy skin and coat. Omega 3 can be found in fish oils, such as salmon and sardines. Omega 6 not only improves the skin and coat, it is also known to prevent inflammation (i.e. arthritis). Omega 6 can be found in borage, flaxseed and evening primrose oils.

Digestive upset is another issue that many of our pets are faced with today. Whether it is a daily occurrence or not, I'm sure at some point, we as pet owners have witnessed the unpleasant results of it. Probiotics are beginning to receive the attention they deserve. Yogurt for instance is known to replace the "good bacteria" back in the digestive tract. The most beneficial sources of probiotics are available in powder or capsule form. They tend to deliver higher doses and are easily absorbed by the body. While plain yogurt can be helpful, some pets are lactose intolerant. Ark Naturals has a great product called Gentle Digest and Wholistic Pet offers a Digest All Plus which not only offers the probiotics, but digestive enzymes which assist in breaking down food.

Ingredients to Avoid In Commercial Pet Foods:

- Avoid generic fats and proteins (e.g. animal fat, poultry fat, meat and bone meal)
- Avoid meat by-products and digest
- Avoid corn, soy and wheat- all of these are allergy prone ingredients.
- Avoid BHT/BHA and ethoxyquin- all of these chemical preservatives have been linked to cancer and other harmful diseases.
- Avoid artificial colors, sugars and sweeteners. (e.g. corn syrup, propyl glycol)

Ingredients To Look For In a Commercial Pet Food:

- Good quality protein source- such as lamb, chicken and turkey meal. If meal is listed in the first few ingredients you can be assured that it is the largest ingredient in the food.
- Whole grains- barley, oatmeal, and rice are good sources of carbohydrates. If possible, try to avoid products that use grain fractions in their ingredient list.
- Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.
- Natural preservatives such as rosemary and vitamins E and C
- Naturally occurring microorganisms (a.k.a friendly bacteria such as acidophillus) yes, our pets need them too!

