

Appetite Change in Dogs

The causes and treatments of a dog's increased or decreased appetite.

CAUSES OF INCREASED APPETITE

Illness: Diabetes or other diseases.

What to do: Take the dog to a veterinarian to diagnose and treat.

Internal parasites: Hookworms, roundworms, tapeworms, among others.

What to do: Take the dog to a veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment of internal parasites. Take along a fresh stool sample (in a small container or plastic bag), so your veterinarian can examine it for parasite eggs.

Behavioral problems: Boredom or "competitive eating" (dogs in multi-dog households).

What to do: For boredom-related eating, increase companionship, family interactions, and exercise. If eating is related to competition, feed dogs in separate locations.

Weather: Cold weather.

What to do: Increase amount fed, bring the dog inside, or provide a warm doghouse if the dog must stay outside. Note: Always provide plenty of fresh water, regardless of weather conditions.

Activity level: Increased activity.

What to do: Increase amount fed if no signs of illness are present. Check with your veterinarian if you're not sure.
CAUSES OF DECREASED APPETITE

Illness: Heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, cancer, dental problems, gastrointestinal disease, viral or bacterial diseases (distemper, parvovirus, leptospirosis, and others).

What to do: Take the dog to a veterinarian to diagnose and treat.

Weather: Hot weather.

What to do: Bring the dog inside, or provide ample shade and a wading pool for water play if the dog must stay outside. Note: Always provide plenty of fresh water, regardless of weather conditions.

Activity level: Decreased activity.

What to do: No action is necessary if no signs of illness are present. Check with your veterinarian if you're not sure.

Advanced age: Older dogs may have decreased appetite due to health problems, changes in senses of smell and/or taste, or cognitive dysfunction.

What to do: Check with a veterinarian to diagnose and treat age-related health problems. Change diet to one that is higher in fat, or switch flavors to increase palatability. Alter the dog's feeding schedule by feeding smaller meals more frequently. Add canned food to dry food to increase palatability. **CAUSES OF PICA** (eating unusual things such as dirt, rocks, fabric)

Behavioral: Boredom, obsessive disorder.

What to do: Increase companionship, family interactions, and exercise. Restrict the dog's access to preferred objects. Consult your veterinarian or an animal behaviorist if the problem continues.

Nutritional: Dogs with nutritional deficiencies may eat dirt or unusual objects in an effort to satisfy their nutritional needs.

What to do: Feed a high-quality, complete and balanced diet. Restrict the dog's access to preferred objects. Consult your veterinarian or an animal behaviorist if the problem continues.



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