

## Supplement Your Athlete's Diet

**Athletic dogs work hard year-round and need more fuel than the average indoor pooch to maintain good health.**

*Lisa Hanks*

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To provide the highest level of energy, look for fatty foods. Fats yield more than twice as much energy as similar amounts of carbohydrates or proteins, and smaller amounts of food can supply a larger amount of energy. To help process these additional fats, your dog will also need higher levels of protein. In addition, you may add supplements to your dog's diet to boost its energy levels and counteract the effects of vigorous exercise.

How much fat and protein should a dog have in its daily diet? In general, high-energy homemade canine diets range from 15 percent to 25 percent fat, and from 30 percent to 40 percent protein; commercial high-performance diets offer 10 percent to 18 percent fat, and 24 percent to 28 percent protein. Whether you are feeding an off-the-shelf diet, making it yourself or some combination of the two, you can easily raise the fat levels your dog's diet.

Two kinds of fat can be added to your dog's diet: fat derived from animal sources, which are saturated fats, and fats derived from plant sources, which are polyunsaturated fats. Animal-derived fats offer the highest levels of energy and are the best high-energy supplements.

Plant-derived fats, easily available in vegetable oils, will make your dog's skin and coat pretty, but they won't add the desired energy jolt. Plant fats contain fatty acids, which are vital for healthy coats and shiny skin.

If your dog is active, but not super-active, try feeding it larger amounts of its regular diet before switching to the high-energy diet. If that doesn't seem to satisfy your dog's energy needs, try adding a little bit of fatty meat, such as chopped or ground beef heart, hamburger, fatty chuck, sirloin steak, lamb or pork, to its meals or increasing the use of fattier cuts of meat in your dog food recipe.

If your dog is super-active, you'll have to add larger amounts of high-octane foods to its meals. One way is to save the meat drippings from your meals of roasted beef, chicken or turkey. (Be sure it does not contain sugar, artificial preservatives or chemicals, or high sodium levels.) You can also make special arrangements with your organic meat supplier to purchase fresh, pure poultry fat or beef tallow. Poultry fat is much preferred by owners of canine athletes because it is highly digestible and also contains the fatty acids that contribute to a shiny coat. Be careful when adding fat to your dog's diet, though. If the dog eats solely the fat or too much of the fatty meat and not enough of its other food, it will lack necessary protein and carbohydrates.

Just a little extra whammy in your dog's diet will have it bright-eyed and raring to mush, even on cold winter mornings. Hmm, maybe you'd better rev up your diet, too.