

## Natural Wellness

### Canine health as a whole

*W. Jean Dodds, DVM*

Holism can be considered the original, traditional form of healthcare that encompasses the whole body and the surrounding environment. In this concept, the body is greater than the sum of its constituent parts, so any therapy that focuses on a single aspect of the body is inadequate and incomplete. How does one achieve holism? The first approach addresses the role and importance of nutrition.

#### Nutrition and the immune system

Wholesome nutrition is the key to maintaining a healthy immune system. While most premium commercial foods are well-balanced, some may be incomplete or imbalanced in certain nutrients, minerals and vitamins when fed exclusively on a regular basis. Further, some companies add chemical preservatives to the final food product to enhance its stability and shelf-life. Nutritional deficiencies or imbalances as well as exposures to various chemicals, drugs and toxins present an ongoing immunological challenge which can suppress immune function, especially in those animals genetically susceptible to immune dysfunction (immune deficiency, autoimmunity, and allergies).

Genetic differences between individuals lead to quantitative variations in dietary requirements for energy and nutrient needs and to maintain health. Also, genetic defects may result in inborn errors of metabolism that affect one or more pathways involving nutrients or their metabolites. While minimal and maximal nutrient requirements have been established for most vitamins and trace mineral elements, optimum amounts for every individual cannot be assumed. Examples of important vitamin and mineral requirements in this regard include vitamin C, vitamin E and selenium, vitamin A, copper and vitamin B12. Similarly, a wide variation occurs in the energy needs of dogs depending on their breed, age, sex, size, and activity levels.

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