

## Feeding Your Senior Dog

### **Senior dog nutrition needs.**

*Cathy M. Rosenthal*

**Watch Your Dogs Weight**Your dog has gone from being fit and trim to overweight and sluggish in just a few months. You haven't changed his food portions or reduced his exercise. So what's up? Just like people, dogs gain weight and have less energy as they age. Studies show that overweight dogs have shorter life spans. Reducing or keeping the weight off in those senior years may actually help your dog live longer, and it will improve his quality of life.

If a checkup determines your dog is otherwise healthy, serve smaller portions of his current food to prevent weight gain, starting with the minimum amount listed on the label for a dog of his size. If your dog isn't satisfied with less food, switch to a senior diet, which has less calories and fat, but more fiber to fill him up. Consult your veterinarian before making any change in your senior dogs diet. When you do switch, mix his old food and his new in increasing proportions of the new food for a couple of weeks to transition him to the new food.

Older dogs may do fine on a senior diet, but very elderly dogs may actually lose too much weight, warns Rebecca Remillard, DVM, of Angell Animal Medical Centers in Boston. Keep an eye on your pets weight up or down so you won't need to make any drastic changes.

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