

The Price of Poor Nutrition for Dogs

Good nutrition for your dog is key for a healthy, active life.

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Without good nutrition, your dog can suffer from a number of problems, including allergies, malnutrition, skin and coat problems, and obesity. Nutrition-related problems can affect any dog, no matter the size.

While dogs can be allergic to many things, some have food allergies to different meats, grains, dairy products, and artificial additives such as colorings, flavorings, and preservatives. Dogs with food allergies often develop skin problems such as rashes, hives, chronic itching, and hot spots (painful, warm infected areas of skin). Some dogs develop allergies to protein and carbohydrate sources after being exposed to them for a long time, so simply changing the protein and carbohydrate sources of your food from beef and corn to turkey and rice, for example, may be enough to halt the allergic reaction. Many dogs with severe skin allergies finally find relief when their owners switch to feeding them a homemade diet.

Most pet dogs are more likely to become overweight than malnourished, but when a dog is fed a diet lacking in basic nutrients, he can become malnourished. Malnutrition can be caused by a diet that is not complete and unbalanced or by a limited diet (for example, meat only). Dogs who aren't fed enough, often due to neglect or other poor conditions, are likely to become malnourished.

On the other hand, too much protein may contribute to kidney disease in some dogs. Some dogs, especially the large and giant breeds, can develop bone problems if they were fed too much calcium as puppies. Some puppies, especially the toy breeds, need many small, frequent, nutrient-dense meals to avoid hypoglycemia. A lack of antioxidants like vitamins C and E could possibly contribute to an increased cancer risk (studies suggest this could be true for people), and inadequate fat can result in a dull, dry coat and itchy, sensitive skin. Some dogs are sensitive to too much copper or a deficiency of zinc in their diet.

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