

Feeding the Fluffy Bichon Frise

Learn how to choose the best food for your Bichon.

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Increasing water intake is a crucial aspect of dietary management of all types of urolithiasis. Increased water consumption dilutes the urine and increases urination, both of which decrease urolith formation. Its sometimes difficult to determine just how much water your dog is consuming (especially water that's contained in food), so veterinarians often recommend increasing the dogs water intake sufficiently to double its urine output or until the urine is clear, colorless and odorless. Feeding canned food or moistened dry food is one way to increase a dogs water intake. Making sure that fresh, clean water is always available helps, too.

The Great ImpostersSome Bichons are plagued with allergies, including allergies to certain foods. Food allergies can be confusing. In some dogs, they cause vomiting and diarrhea. In others, they target the skin, causing inflammation and itchiness. Its not uncommon for a Bichon to develop an allergy to a food its been eating for years. Finally, some so-called food allergies aren't true allergies at all, but rather sensitivities or adverse reactions that lack the immunological characteristics of allergies.

Halstead believes allergies and skin problems are major health problems in Bichons Frises. When her first Bichon had severe skin problems, Halstead, a registered nurse, used her medical training to research the problem and develop a diet plan that included high-quality lamb-and-rice kibble and several supplements. The skin problems resolved.

I believe that allergies can develop from poor nutrition, as well as skin problems, and one causes the other, Halstead says. I think the improvement in skin problems was due to a combination of a diet change, which may have removed some allergens, as well as improved nutrition, which promoted healthier skin.

Although Halstead was able to solve her Bichons skin problems by herself, most owners will need to work with a veterinarian or veterinary nutritionist to correct nutritionally related disorders.

If your Bichon Frise has a food allergy or sensitivity, your veterinarian may recommend using an elimination diet (one that contains a protein and carbohydrate source that your Bichon has never eaten) to pinpoint the triggering food or foods. This diet is usually fed for at least eight weeks. No other food should be fed during the diet trial. If the symptoms persist, a different diet (or possibly skin testing) may be recommended.

If the symptoms have resolved after eight weeks, single ingredients (such as chicken, wheat, corn, soy, etc.) are systematically added to the diet (diet challenge). If no reaction occurs, another ingredient is added, and so on, until a reaction is triggered. Foods that elicit a reaction are eliminated from the diet.

By now, its probably evident that canine nutrition has come a long way since the days of meat-flavored dog food. The choices are here to stay. Sure, feeding your dog is more complicated these days, but all those choices make it easier than ever for you to provide your Bichon with exactly the type of nutrition it needs. Your Bichon will be healthier because of it, and that should make you both happy.