

Feeding the Fluffy Bichon Frise

Learn how to choose the best food for your Bichon.

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Not so many years ago, feeding a dog was easy. Dog food was either canned or dry and usually some sort of generic meat flavor. You opened the can or bag and poured the food into the dish.

Today, feeding a dog is all about choices. Everywhere you turn, theres another choice. Do you want dry, canned or frozen? Adult maintenance, puppy or senior? Regular, light or high protein? Organic? Preservative-free? Vegetarian? Kangaroo?

Wait a minute. Feeding your Bichon doesn't have to give you an anxiety attack. Lets just start at the beginning and take a look at some of the things you need to know.

The BasicsFor optimal health, your Bichon needs protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and water. Protein is essential for the growth and repair of muscles, bones and other body tissues. Its also used in the production of disease-fighting antibodies, as well as enzymes and hormones. Carbohydrates are metabolized into glucose, the bodys principal energy source. Fats supply energy when glucose is unavailable. They're also used for hormone production, nervous system function and vitamin transport. Vitamins and minerals participate in many functions, including bone growth, healing, metabolism, fluid balance, and muscle and nerve function.

Finally, your Bichon needs plenty of fresh, clean water every day. As the major component of its body, water participates in its every function. Adequate water intake also helps prevent formation of urinary stones (urolithiasis), a potential problem for some Bichons. The body cannot store water, only conserve it by somewhat limited means. A good rule of thumb is that dogs need at least one ounce of water per pound of body weight each day, even in cold weather. Hot weather or vigorous exercise can double or even triple that requirement. And make sure the water is fresh and cleansome Bichons won't drink if it isn't.

Pick and Chooselts not necessary to choose the most expensive food, but you shouldn't buy the cheapest food on the shelf either, says Craig Datz, D.V.M., a clinical assistant professor at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I see problemslack of condition, poor coat qualitywhen owners try to feed bargain foods that aren't nutritionally well balanced. Those foods just aren't going to have high-quality ingredients at those low prices, Dr. Datz says.

Laura Purnell, a Bichon breeder from Stilwell, Kansas, prefers to feed premium food. In fact, when asked what she considers to be the most important thing about feeding Bichons, she says, Feed a good-quality food. Don't skimp on food.