

Feeding the Border Collie's Fire

Your expert guide to feeding both hard-working and less-active Border Collies.

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Border Collies are constantly in motion, from herding sheep in a field to fetching a Frisbee in the park. Motion equals kinetic energy, and the higher output of this breed requires higher input of nutrients. On the flip side, the rare Border Collie that spends more time sleeping at your feet than exercising will pack on the pounds if it consumes more food than it burns. Your Border Collies individual needs are unique and vary according to its genetic make-up, which influences its metabolism, digestion and the absorption of nutrients. Also factor in environment: Whether your dog lives indoors with no temperature extremes or outdoors, it must burn energy to either stay warm in cold weather or cool off in warm weather. Offering good nutrition for your Border Collie is a balancing act.

Along with proper exercise and regular veterinary checkups, paying attention to the food your dog eats may be the most important daily contribution you can make to its health and longevity. The choices may seem endless and confusing, and venturing down the pet-food aisle is a bit overwhelming. Lets sort the information you need into organized bites, so you can make wise nutritional decisions with confidence.

Custom Collie Food Working Border Collies are the sports cars of the canine world furry Corvettes that need premium fuel for their engines. The more active the dog, the more calories burned. With your dogs daily ration, you'll replenish the calories burned and supply protein to help build strong muscles; vitamins and minerals to support muscle activity and other physiologic processes; and antioxidants to maintain and repair cellular wear-and-tear (also called oxidation).

Optimal nutrition requires a customized approach. Karen Thomason, D.V.M., and her husband, Bernard Feldman, D.V.M., own 11 Border Collies. The dogs help work the Scottish blackface sheep that they raise on their farm in Pilot, Virginia, and also compete in herding trials. I don't stick to one food for all the dogs, says Dr. Thomason. She considers each dogs weight, coat condition and how its performing in the field.

The older ones may be carrying too much weight, or might not be as active, and so I put them on a restricted-calorie food, Dr. Thomason adds. Younger ones may have trouble maintaining enough weight, plus different genetic lines tend to be too thin, and seem to overheat working in the field. A performance-type diet, with higher fat levels helps these dogs put on weight. I like to feel some fat on their ribs, but they shouldn't jiggle, she says.