

Good Food for Great Boxers

Proper nutrition enhances your Boxer's sleek good looks and vibrant personality.

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Carbohydrates: Carbohydrates include dietary fiber, sugars and starches. Dogs don't need many carbohydrates in their diets because they can derive the necessary sugars (such as glucose) from the protein sources in their diets. Although dogs can digest small amounts of starch and sugar without trouble, large amounts, especially if introduced suddenly, can cause digestive trouble.

Fats: Fats in moderation are a necessary part of the canine diet. Fat is a concentrated energy source that carries vitamins throughout the body and provides essential fatty acids, which help maintain cell membranes and a glossy coat and contribute to many of the body's processes, such as digestion.

Vitamins and minerals: The importance of vitamins and minerals is more clearly understood in the human diet than it is in the canine diet. However, we understand the importance of calcium (for bones, teeth and blood), magnesium (for heart and nerve function), potassium (for nerve and muscle function) and iron (for hemoglobin, the substance in blood that carries oxygen) in a dog's diet. Important vitamins, including E (an antioxidant), A (for normal vision), D (for bone growth) and the B-complex vitamins (for normal cell function) must be obtained from the diet. Other vitamins, such as C, can be synthesized by the dog's body. Vitamin C, also known as ascorbic acid, is needed by the body to produce collagen, the primary component of ligaments and tendons, which are the fibrous bands that hold bones to bones and muscles to bones, respectively. Too little vitamin C means that collagen cannot be produced properly, and scurvy can result. (However, too much vitamin C can be harmful as well.)

What to Look For All of this nutritional information is enough to make an owner's head spin. You may be thinking, I don't have a degree in biology; how can I figure out what is best for my Boxer? Not to worry.

What Kind of Food is Best? According to Marty Fettman, D.V.M., Ph.D. and Mark Morris Chair in Clinical Nutrition at Colorado State University's College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, the form of the food actually makes little difference nutritionally, as long as the brand is high quality and the label states the food is complete and balanced. The main difference between dry and canned food lies in the amount of moisture in the food. Dry foods contain about 10 percent moisture; canned foods have 74 to 78 percent quite a difference.

Dry food tends to be less expensive. Dry food helps to keep the teeth cleaner through the mechanics of chewing, says Dr. Muns. In my opinion it should be the mainstay of a dog or cat's diet preferably the only component of the diet. Canned foods are like Twinkies. They taste really yummy, so feeding a lot can lead to demanding, picky eaters. That's why if it's fed, it should not make up the bulk of the diet.