

Good Food for Great Boxers

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

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Problem SignsAn animal's coat is a sure sign of what's going on inside the animal's body. That's true of all dogs, especially Boxers. If a Boxer isn't receiving the proper nutrition, its coat looks dry, dull and brittle and the skin appears either flaky or greasy. These signs may indicate a shortage of zinc or essential fatty acids in the diet. However, changes in the coat and hair loss might also indicate an illness, such as canine follicular dysplasia. This uncommon disorder, which causes dogs to lose hair in patches, may be inherited from a dog's parents and is unrelated to nutrition. Rather than attempt to diagnose and treat skin ailments yourself, take the dog to a qualified veterinarian.

If you're feeding your Boxer a good commercial diet, nutritional supplements, such as vitamin or minerals, aren't necessary, say Dr. Fettman and Dr. Muns. In fact, feeding your dog supplements may alter the dog's nutritional balance. For this reason, Dr. Fettman does not advocate giving supplements or other extras to dogs including excessive numbers of treats. In addition, too much of certain vitamins, such as A and D, can actually be toxic to your dog. They should be left in the bottle and on the shelf for the most part, says Dr. Muns of supplements. Any food from one of the major manufacturers will have all the vitamins, minerals, etc., that the pet needs, and then some. If you are interested in the possibility of adding supplements to your dog's diet, work with a veterinarian to determine what's best for your dog.

Whether you choose homemade meals or commercial food (dry or canned), remember that your Boxer relies on you and your good sense to keep it healthy. The area of nutritional studies is a growing science within veterinary medicine, and consumers have just begun recognizing nutrition's important role. Your wonderfully healthy Boxer has known all along that, while clothes may make the man, it's the food that makes the dog.

Home Cookin for BoxersToday, more pet owners are turning to their own kitchens to feed their animals. Homemade diets sound tremendously appealing. After all, you know exactly the type and quality of ingredients included, you know the sanitary conditions the food was prepared under and, hey, you really love your dog, right? However, there's a lot more to making a homemade diet than meets the eye.

First, there is the time and the expense involved. If you find yourself ordering take-out for dinner most nights because you don't have time to cook, chances are cooking for your Boxer won't work. Also, expense is an aspect to consider. Making food at home will, in most cases, cost more per day than buying commercial dog food. In their book *Natural Health for Dogs and Cats*, authors Richard Pitcairn, D.V.M., Ph.D., and Susan Hubble Pitcairn note that the average price of the books' dog-maintenance recipes was 66 cents per day. Canned food ranged from 38 to 68 cents per day; dry ranged from 18 to 28 cents per day.