

Good Food for Great Boxers

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

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Few sights are more beautiful than a Boxer in top condition, with its bright eyes, well-defined muscles, glistening coat and exuberant energy. Less delightful is the sight of a flabby, overweight Boxer or one with a dull, lifeless-looking coat. Silky coats and highly toned muscles don't come naturally. To ensure your Boxers health and vitality, you must follow proper nutritional guidelines. Without good nutrition, no amount of grooming or exercise will turn your dog into a picture-perfect Boxer.

Meat Isn't Enough Although its easy to think of dogs as eating only meat, they aren't strictly meat-eaters. Dogs can derive nutrition from vegetables and grains as well as meat, explains Margaret Muns, D.V.M., staff veterinarian for the Best Friends Bulletin Board. In this respect, they differ from cats, which must have meat-based diets because their bodies aren't able to synthesize certain nutrients. Whereas cats must get these essentials from meat, dogs bodies can manufacture their own essential nutrients, such as amino acids. Dogs have even been known to not only do well on vegetarian diets, but to thrive on them.

The dogs physiological need for greater nutritional variety makes the species more omnivorous (eating everything) than carnivorous (eating meat). The important aspects of a dogs diet include proteins, carbohydrates, fats, amino acids, minerals, vitamins and water. A balanced diet that includes each of these nutrients in the correct amounts is vital for a healthy, happy Boxer.

Proteins: Protein is an important source of energy and amino acids for dogs. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins themselves, and the dogs body breaks down proteins to build new amino acids out of them. Protein can come from meat, such as beef, lamb or chicken; fish; eggs; and vegetables, such as corn; or rice combined with legumes. Some canned foods even offer texturized vegetable protein. Texturized vegetable protein (TVP) is commonly seen in the ingredient lists of canned pet foods, explains Dr. Muns. It is composed of extruded soy flour that is dyed and shaped to resemble meat products. So TVP is a way to increase the protein quantity and quality without adding expensive cuts of meats.