

The Chihuahua's Special Dietary Needs

Proper nutrition keeps these little dogs fit, healthy and happy.

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The amount of energy Chihuahuas expend is amazing. While novice and experienced Chihuahua owners alike recognize that these sturdy, spry dogs are full of life, personality and seemingly boundless energy, perhaps no one realizes just how busy these little bees are. An active 5-pound Chihuahua burns almost three times the amount of calories per pound than a dog weighing 150 pounds, says Dan Carey, D.V.M., with Iams Research and Development division.

Chihuahuas like all breeds have certain nutritional needs to keep them healthy, happy and long-lived. Along with their small size come special dietary needs. Or, rather, they have special dietary needs because of their small size. Here's some advice for making sure your Chihuahua is fit, trim, well-fed and full of energy.

Plump Is Not Okay The key to a healthy Chihuahua is proper nutrition. While this fact isn't surprising, it's difficult for Chihuahua owners not to spoil these little dogs. And, the number one way in which most dog owners spoil their pets is through food rewards—a little extra kibble here, a few more treats there and even some table scraps thrown in, too.

Chihuahuas are small, sturdy little dogs that think they're much bigger than they really are. Many owners buy into this bravado and feed their pets much more than they require for a balanced, healthy diet, which leads to one of the biggest problems found in pet Chihuahuas: obesity.

"Owners don't realize how little it takes to keep Chihuahuas going, and because owners don't fully realize how tiny Chihuahuas really are, owners tend to overfeed these dogs, says Dr. Carey.

Well-meaning owners spoil and pamper their dogs with food, and it doesn't take much to unbalance their diet. With larger dogs, this problem isn't as detrimental, but one snack or table treat can easily wind up being one-third the daily food intake of a Chihuahua.

Table scraps should be avoided at all costs, says Sandra Whittle of Chesterfield, Virginia, Chihuahua Club of America past president. Chihuahuas are used to being spoiled and pampered, and owners have to be careful that they don't spoil the dogs in the wrong ways.