

Feed Your Collie Right

Customized nutrition is the foundation for your dog's health.

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Portion Pointers Lots of factors influence the amount of food a dog needs each day. Some of the most important include:

Age: Pound for pound, Collie puppies need more food than adults. Senior dogs may need more--or less--food than they did when they were younger.

Activity level: A high-energy Collie burns up more calories than one that spends most of the day lounging on its bed (or your bed!).

Metabolic rate: Some dogs (like some people) metabolize their food more rapidly than others, even if other factors are the same. These dogs need more food than those that cruise along at a lower metabolic rate.

Food quality: Premium dog foods are made with high-quality ingredients, which are usually more digestible than the ingredients found in low-cost brands. This means your Collie won't have to eat as much of the premium brand.

Size: Larger dogs usually need more food than smaller ones, as long as they're similar with respect to the other factors discussed above.

Although its important to understand the factors that influence nutritional requirements, you don't have to be a nutritionist to figure out how much your Collie needs to eat. You just need to read the label (which includes feeding instructions) and use a little common sense.

The label instructions provide a starting amount (usually quite generous), which you can then increase or decrease according to your Collies response. For example, if you feed the recommended amount for a few weeks and your Collie loses weight, increase the amount you feed by 10 to 20 percent (unless your dog needs to shed a few pounds). If your Collie gains weight, decrease the amount. Continue like this until you determine the amount of food that keeps your Collie in optimal condition. Remember that you'll need to adjust the amount to compensate for changes in the other factors. Most Collies are good eaters, but when they are on the show circuit or working livestock, they need extra protein and fat in their diet. You may need to make adjustments as activity levels rise, or if you switch foods.