

Feed Your Collie Right

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

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Bones--if they're not finely ground--can damage your Collies teeth and gastrointestinal tract. Youngsters and Oldsters Collie puppies have different nutritional needs than adults, especially when it comes to protein, energy and the calcium-phosphorus balance. Protein is especially important for puppies because its essential for muscle and bone growth. Dry puppy foods usually contain about 25 to 35 percent more protein than adult maintenance foods. Puppies also need lots of energy, but letting your Collie puppy eat as much as it can stuff down will quickly make it overweight, and may lead to some serious health problems.

For example, excessive weight may cause your puppys skeleton to develop improperly. Overfeeding may also play a role in the development of hip dysplasia (malformation of the hip joint, which leads to arthritis) and panosteitis (a painful inflammation of the leg bones).

Other obesity-related health problems are discussed in the following section. Puppies also differ from adult dogs in their requirement for calcium and phosphorus--minerals required for proper skeletal development and growth. You don't need to worry about your Collie puppys calcium and phosphorus intake as long as you feed a completely balanced puppy food, because these foods are formulated to provide the appropriate amounts. Puppies have small stomachs and high metabolic rates, so they need to eat several times a day in order to consume adequate amounts of nutrients. Puppies less than 3 months old should be fed at least four times a day. Puppies 3 to 5 months old should be fed three times a day.

Puppies 6 months of age and older can be fed on an adult schedule of two meals a day. The nutritional needs of senior Collies are affected by age-related changes in the bodys function and by health problems, if present. Maintaining proper body condition--neither too fat nor too thin--is a primary concern, as it is at every age. Dogs often gain weight as they age because their metabolism slows down and they become less active. Obesity can result if the diet is not adjusted to compensate for these changes. Most senior foods have less fat and fewer calories than food formulated for younger dogs. Many contain added fiber, which adds bulk without increasing calories.

Not all senior dogs are overweight. Some dogs--especially active ones--maintain near-optimal body condition well into their senior years. Others lose weight as they age. Weight loss in senior dogs may be caused by decreased food intake, which often occurs with chronic health problems, such as dental disorders, diabetes, cancer, heart or kidney disease, and many others. Some older dogs don't want to eat because their senses of smell and taste are less acute.

Others eat seemingly adequate quantities of food, but lose weight because they can't digest food or absorb nutrients efficiently. Underweight seniors benefit from foods with added levels of high-quality fat to increase palatability and boost energy content. The ability to metabolize protein decreases with age, so senior dogs--even healthy ones--need up to 50 percent more protein than younger adults. Inadequate protein intake can cause muscle wasting, weakness and immune system impairment. To prevent protein deficiencies, most senior foods have protein levels that are as high as those in puppy foods.