

Feed Your Collie Right

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

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Take these three simple steps to reduce your Collies risk of developing bloat:

Feed at least twice a day. Your Collie won't be quite so hungry when mealtime rolls around, and may eat more slowly. (Or maybe not: Some dogs always gobble their food.) The meals will be smaller, too, because you'll be dividing the total days ration by the number of meals you feed.

Don't let your Collie guzzle water right after eating. Take up the water dish (temporarily) and offer your Collie a few laps of water every five to 10 minutes until your pal is no longer thirsty. Remember to put the water dish back down so your Collie can have water throughout the day or night.

Limit exercise immediately after meals. Enforced rest isn't necessary, but wait a few hours before you and your Collie go for a jog or play a rousing game of Catch-the-Collie.

Problem Foods Canine food allergies aren't unusual, but they're sometimes tricky to diagnose because they often cause dermatitis--an itchy skin inflammation--rather than vomiting, diarrhea or flatulence. A dog that develops digestive-tract disturbances after eating a certain food probably has a food sensitivity, a type of disorder that lacks the characteristics of a true allergy. Both types of reactions can cause chronic health problems if left untreated.

Sometimes a new dietary ingredient triggers the allergy or sensitivity, but that's not always the case--sometimes its an ingredient the dog has eaten for years. The only way to tell for sure is to eliminate the suspected ingredient from the diet and see if the symptoms go away.

To do this, a veterinarian prescribes an elimination diet. Initially, the diet consists solely of one protein and one carbohydrate that the dog has never eaten. No other foods or edible products, such as bones, rawhide or chewable heartworm preventives, are permitted. If the symptoms are still present after eight weeks, a different diet (or possibly skin testing) is usually recommended. If the symptoms clear up on the one carb, one protein diet, single ingredients, such as beef, chicken, corn and soy, are then systematically added back to it. If no reaction occurs, another ingredient is added. This procedure is repeated until food-allergy symptoms occur. Ingredients that elicit a reaction are eliminated from the diet.