

Feed Your Collie Right

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

Karla S. Rugh, D.V.M., Ph.D

When it comes to food, your Collie cares about just one thing: taste. You, however, want that tasty food to be nutritious, as well. Fortunately, finding a dog food that can give both of you what you want is easy, with some nutritional basics in mind.

Your Collie needs the following nutrients for optimal growth and health:

- Proteins: Are used for growth and repair of muscles, bones and other body tissues; and production of antibodies, enzymes and hormones.

- Carbohydrates: Are metabolized into glucose, the body's principal energy source.

- Fats: Are used for energy when glucose is unavailable, hormone production, nervous-system function and vitamin transport.

- Vitamins and minerals: Are used in muscle and nerve function, bone growth, healing, metabolism and fluid balance.

He also needs fresh, clean water--at least 1 ounce per pound of body weight per day, even in cold weather. The body can't store water, only conserve it, and it doesn't do that very well. Hot weather or vigorous exercise can double or even triple your dog's daily water requirement.

What's for Supper? Dry food is the least expensive commercially available dog food, costing about \$200 to \$400 per year for an adult Collie. Its bulky and takes longer to eat than other foods, so your Collie may feel fuller after a meal. The crunchiness of unmoistened dry food promotes dental health by reducing plaque accumulation and massaging the gums. Canned food is more expensive than dry food--it'll cost about \$600 to \$800 per year if you feed your Collie a canned-food-only diet. Canned foods palatability and concentrated energy make it a good supplement to a dry-food ration for underweight dogs or those recovering from illness. Canned food also makes a dandy treat--as meatballs, or sliced and baked.

The advantages of frozen food--palatability and concentrated energy--are similar to those of canned products. Frozen food is usually more expensive than canned. Storing more than a few packages of frozen food can be a problem if your freezer space is limited. Unused thawed portions must be refrigerated. Unlike other forms of dog food, frozen food is available in both cooked and raw forms.