

## Feeding the Fit and Trim Dachshund

**Proper nutrition is the key to protecting your dog from obesity and disease.**

*Kim Campbell Thornton*

The nutritional needs of a pet Dachshund receiving normal exercise can be met with a regular food, but the intense competition of conformation showing or field trialing calls for additional nutrients to meet the stresses of that lifestyle. For instance, field dogs may need additional food or a higher-protein food if they're doing a lot of running during the season.

Dachshunds are unique, Dr. Laflamme says. They're small dogs, and pound for pound, small dogs in general have greater energy requirements than large-breed dogs. So when it comes to Dachshunds that are involved in showing or field trials, the increased energy requirement of a small dog is coupled with the increased energy needs of an active dog. They may need a dense, nutrient-rich food, one that's high in protein and fat. On the other hand, it's important not to let them eat too much and become overweight.

Many exhibitors supplement their show dogs' diets to improve coat texture and shine, but not all believe it's necessary. I feed my dogs a premium commercial diet, she says. They occasionally get some boiled chicken or liver or something like that, but as a treat, not a supplement. They are all show dogs, and they all have lovely coats and skin.

For treats, Breidenstein gives her dogs a little cottage cheese, yogurt or vegetables mixed in with their food. My female loves bananas, and our male tends more toward meat things, such as liver snaps. They both love baby carrots. We try to make their snacks as healthy as possible, Breidenstein says. Different Life Stages, Different Needs A Dachshund's nutritional needs will change with age. Because of lifestyle differences and the onset of health problems, an older dog may show more individual variability in its nutritional needs than a younger dog or even a puppy. As its energy requirements decrease, its need for protein, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients remains the same.

Rather than cutting back on the amount of food an older Dachshund eats, Dr. Laflamme recommends switching to a diet that's lower in calories. When you reduce the amount of food the dog eats, you're not only cutting back on calories, you're cutting back on protein and other nutrients, Dr. Laflamme says. With a lower-calorie food, you're simply reducing the calories, not the other nutrients.

No matter how old your Dachshund is, there's one sure way to know whether its food is doing its job: Trust your eyes. A look at your Dachshund should show you a trim, confident dog with a shiny coat, and eyes sparkling with intelligence and good health, ready for whatever comes its way.

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