

Feeding the Fit and Trim Dachshund

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

Kim Campbell Thornton

The popular image of the Dachshund is of a sausage on legs, but that notion is as far from the truth. This smallest of the hounds is meant to be robustly muscular, agile and tireless. To maintain that sturdy body and alert spirit, the Dachshund needs an owner who will provide it with a high-quality diet, give it plenty of exercise and prevent it from overeating.

When it comes to Dachsie nutrition, its important to remember that the breed comes in two sizes and three coat varieties, so theres a total of six Dachshund types. Each has its own unique nutritional needs, says breeder Linda Stowe of Champaign, Illinois. What might be good for a standard would not do for a miniature, she says. The same is true with supplements. What might be good for the coat of a longhaired or smooth Dachshund would not be good for a wirehairs coat.

The proper foundation for each type, however, is a good food that provides just the right mix of protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals. Each dog is an individual, so you may need to experiment until you find a diet that suits your Dachshund perfectly.

Experienced owners recommend starting your search with a premium dry kibble. I use a dry food with a [moderate] amount of fat and protein, says Diane E. Heldebrant of Sacramento, California. Dachshunds don't do well on foods high in fat and protein.

Dachshund fancier Alison Breidenstein, of San Diego, Calif., says her experience has been that dry food is more easily digested. When I have mixed in canned food or given them strictly canned food, their stools weren't as firm, and they didn't seem to be as regular, Breidenstein says.

As a breed, Dachshunds tend to have problems with their teeth, and one purported advantage of dry food is that it has an abrasive action as the dog chews, helping to minimize the buildup of plaque and tartar on the teeth. However, whether or not your Dachshund eats dry food, regular dental care is still essential. The best ways to help prevent Dachshunds from developing dental problems are to encourage them to chew on appropriate items, brush their teeth daily and schedule veterinary cleanings as needed.