

## The Doberman Diet

**Help your Dobe be all it can be by feeding nutrient-rich meals.**

*By Christina Cox-Evick*

Nutritional demands may change regularly throughout your Dobermans lifetime, therefore, it is important that you constantly adjust your dogs diet. Even a change from warm summer to colder winter temperatures can affect your dogs caloric needs. A young dog may self-exercise a great deal just by dashing about a spacious yard. Even when your dog is beyond the age of puppy foods, it may need a relatively high-calorie food as found in a 26-to-16 protein-to-fat ratio diet. As it matures, the mad dash may change to more of a stroll around the perimeter. This strolling dog might do better on a 22-to-12 ratio. No matter what diet you decide upon, be aware of your dogs condition. If your Doberman starts exhibiting signs of digestive problems, poor coat or even chronic ear gunk, a change of food may be in order.

What about canned foods, you ask? When discussing dry food versus canned in her book, *The Natural Dog*, written with Norma Eckroate, author Mary L. Brennan, D.V.M. states, Though the canning process destroys nutrients, it is not as harmful as the processing of dry foods. The problem is that canned foods contain a high percentage of moisture. Therefore, feeding an active Doberman nothing but a high-quality canned food can be expensive because it might take several cans a day to keep your dog at its proper weight. Adding canned food to a dry diet is a suitable compromise.

Although supplementation should not be undertaken haphazardly, there is one vitamin that has become a particularly popular addition to the young dogs diet vitamin C. Vitamin C is vital for the formation of collagen, the glue that holds the body together, and is thus credited with aiding in proper joint development. Considering the frequency of hip and elbow dysplasia (improper formation of joints in large-breed dogs), many owners are choosing to supplement their puppies diets with vitamin C. Breeder Sharon Stimpfle of Lockbourne, Ohio, has been involved with Dobermans for 32 years. In addition to being active in conformation shows, she and her dogs also compete in obedience and agility.

These future activities demand that her puppies develop properly. I give my puppies vitamin C between the ages of 3 and 6 months, says Stimpfle. Always consult with your veterinarian before supplementing your dogs diet. Some supplements, particularly calcium, when administered incorrectly, can cause health problems.