

## How to Keep Your Yorkshire Terrier Fit

### **Feed your Yorkshire Terrier a diet based on its needs.**

*Kim Campbell Thornton*

When it comes to proper nutrition for Yorkies, its important to remember that each member of the breed is an individual with unique nutritional needs. The proper foundation for any Yorkies diet is a quality food that provides just the right mix of protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals. Keep in mind that pound for pound, small dogs generally have higher energy requirements than large dogs, so they need a diet made up of high-quality ingredients.

No one food can meet the needs of every dog, so be prepared to experiment until you find a diet that suits your Yorkie perfectly. Factors to take into account include life stage, activity level and lifestyle. For instance, while a pet and a show dog both need a high-quality diet, the stress of a show dogs life may necessitate a food that's higher in fat and protein.

Experienced Yorkie owners recommend starting your search with a high-quality dry kibble. Dry foods tend to be best for most dogs, especially the Toys, says breeder Cher Hildebrand of Dayton, Ohio. The dry is a higher quality food and will help keep the teeth in better shape, as the crunching helps with tartar control.

The abrasive action of dry food is indeed a plus, because Yorkies, like so many toy breeds, are prone to dental problems. Dental cleaning is almost annual and extractions are sometimes necessary. Breeder Suzette Heider of Palm Bay, Florida, says its not uncommon to see Yorkies that are nearly toothless by the time they reach their golden years.

Starting a puppy out on dry food, along with regular brushing, can help minimize problems, but a Yorkie that already has dental disease may have an easier time eating moistened dry food or canned food.

Naturally, you also need to look for a food that will meet your dogs other physical needs: growth for puppies and health maintenance and energy production for dogs of all ages. Dr. Mackay recommends a growth or puppy diet for any dog younger than 1 year old. At 9 months to 1 year of age, switch to a diet for adult dogs. Manufacturers of senior diets usually recommend starting dogs on them at 7 years of age, but small dogs such as Yorkies don't age as quickly as larger breeds, Dr. Mackay says. Depending on your veterinarians advice, you may choose to wait a year or two longer before switching your Yorkie to a food for older dogs.

The recommended amount on the dog food label is simply a starting point; your dog may require more or less. In general, a Yorkshire Terrier eats 1/4 to 1/2 cup daily. Puppies require 3 to 4 meals daily, and an adult dog should eat twice daily.