

IMPROVING YOUR PET'S HEALTH WITH SUPPLEMENTS

By Val Clows

There are several steps that pet owners can take to improve their pets' health. The first step would be to feed the best food that you can find: raw, canned or kibble. Ignore the front of the bag, the pictures and the name of the food. These are marketing tricks and rarely depict what is actually in the bag. You need to read the ingredient label!!! Ingredients are listed in order of weight in descending order; hence the first few ingredients listed are the most important.

The best foods for your pet contain whole meats, whole grains, vegetables and fruits with natural or no preservatives. Low quality foods contain more corn and grain than meat, a lot of grain fragments, by-products, chemicals, artificial colors and flavors.

The next step would be to feed healthy treats to your animal. Look for the same quality ingredients in treats as in foods. Some treats offer added benefits for your pet. These include "Greenies," a green toothbrush-shaped bone that cleans dogs' teeth; "Hip Action" or "Sea Mobility," yummy chicken or beef jerky treats loaded with glucosamine, chondroitin and MSM which reduce the pain from hip and joint problems and arthritis; "Mellow Dog," a biscuit that contains herbs to gently calm fearful and anxious dogs.

Another step would be to use supplements appropriate for your pet's age, activity level, health, environmental and physical stress. Most pets can benefit from various supplements during their lifetimes. Good multi-vitamin/mineral supplements are available in chewables, powders or liquids. This is especially important to maintain optimum health or help during an illness. Look for a natural formula rather than a synthetic.

Digestive enzymes can be added to your pet's meals to assist the digestion of processed food, allowing the animal to utilize all the food's nutrients and reducing stress on the pancreas and liver. Digestive enzymes are especially important for older and health-compromised pets.

Essential fatty acids (EFA) and Omega 3, 6, 9, from fish oils, flax oil, are important supplements to maintain healthy skin and coats, for heart and circulation, and to reduce joint inflammation. Antioxidants are used to fight free radicals that can cause premature aging, cancer and other health problems.

Joint supplements such as glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate, shark cartilage and sea cucumber are available in treats, chewables, liquids and powders. These are beneficial for all dogs, but especially for breeds prone to joint problems: dogs involved in sports like agility, frisbee, hunting, and obedience, working/service dogs and senior dogs.