Supplementing Your Pet's Diet

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Pets, like people, are individuals. As such, they have unique nutritional needs, requiring different levels of vitamins, minerals, fats, protein, fiber, and other nutrients. Even the highest quality pet foods, while providing the majority of nutrients pets need, cannot fulfill the unique nutritional requirements of every individual pet. In fact, no single food will be the right food for every pet at every life stage. Puppies/kittens, pregnant pets, lactating pets, older pets, hard-working pets, and pets with medical conditions all have different nutritional requirements. Supplements can help fulfill these requirements.

A supplement is something added to a pet's diet on a regular basis - typically to make up for a deficiency of some sort, or to improve/enhance overall health by targeting a specific health issue. Supplements are given in many forms - a healthy food (such as yogurt, cottage cheese, or cooked eggs), a multi-vitamin, a mineral paste, fiber granules, and so on.

Pets with bright eyes, a shiny coat, soft skin, and a healthy energy level probably do not need supplements, especially if they're eating a healthy pet food. However, animals with lackluster eyes and coat, dry skin, and low energy levels can definitely benefit from supplements. Pets who receive sufficient amounts of vitamins, minerals, fats, protein, and fiber experience better skin and coat condition, increased energy, higher resistance to stress, and improvements in general overall health.

Supplementing with Drs. Foster & Smith Pet Food

In creating Drs. Foster & Smith pet foods, Dr. Race Foster and Dr. Marty Smith chose healthy, quality ingredients that would provide most pets with virtually all the nutrients they need. However, since no two pets share the same exact nutritional needs, no single food will be the right food for every pet. Further, since some pets cannot digest and metabolize all pet food ingredients, they will not receive all the nutrients provided in the food. Supplements can help fulfill each individual pet's individual nutritional needs and deficiencies.

Supplements for specific life situations, events, and stages

Pets' lives include unique challenges that can best be met with the aid of excellent nutrition. To ensure your pet is always in top form, feed a healthy, quality food, and supplement when necessary. Following are examples of pets who may benefit from supplements.

- **Growing puppies and kittens** - a daily multi-vitamin such as Lifestage Select® Puppy Formula may help ensure that young, growing pets get the vitamins they need for healthy tissues, strong bones, and overall good health.
- **Hard-working, extremely active pets** such as herding dogs, working field dogs, and police dogs typically have increased nutritional demands related to the consistent expenditure of large amounts of energy. A multi-vitamin such as Lifestage Select® Adult Formula can help provide the additional vitamins and minerals they may need.
- **Pregnant pets/lactating pets** typically require a multi-vitamin supplement such as Lifestage Select® Adult Formula to ensure they're getting maximum nutrition for their bodies and their babies' developing bodies.
- **Older/senior pets** tend to absorb fewer vitamins, minerals, and electrolytes through the intestinal tract, while simultaneously losing more of them through the kidneys and urinary tract. A daily multi-vitamin such as Lifestage Select® Senior Formula may help provide older pets with increased levels of antioxidants, calcium, phosphorus, iron, and other valuable nutrients.
- **Arthritic pets** of all ages may benefit from a daily supplement containing ingredients such as Glucosamine, Chondroitin, and MSM. A supplement such as Drs. Foster & Smith Joint Care Premium is highly recommended for pets suffering from arthritis, hip dysplasia, or other joint problems.

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- **Pets with extremely dry skin or dry coat** can benefit from skin and coat supplements, which are high in fatty acids. Supplements like Drs. Foster & Smith Vitacoat® Plus help moisturize skin, while restoring shine and beauty to a pet's coat.

- **Pets under stress, pets recovering from surgery, and pets with health problems/medical conditions** can also benefit from supplements. These situations can cause an animal to eat less than normal, and receive insufficient levels of nutrients. A multi-vitamin supplement can make up for the lack of nutrients. If digestive disorders are a problem, supplements such as Acidophilus+ can help make digestion easier/more comfortable, boosting your pet's desire to eat.

- **Pets with allergies** are often given supplements formulated especially for the skin. A supplement rich in fatty acids like Drs. Foster & Smith Vitacaps® - particularly when used with Drs. Foster & Smith Biotin - may help restore skin and coat condition.

- **Pets on weight-loss diets** generally eat less, and therefore may not receive all the nutrients their bodies need to thrive especially if not being fed a balanced "lite" diet. Multi-vitamins can provide the essential vitamins and minerals your pet's body needs to function normally and maintain good health.

In Conclusion

Regardless of what kind of food you feed your pet, you may need to add a supplement to ensure your pet has the right levels of nutrients for optimal health. Before giving your pet a supplement, carefully consider the food you are currently feeding, or the food you plan to feed. Determine the quality of the food's ingredients, and whether the food already contains added vitamins. The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) has created dog food nutrient profiles, and cat food nutrient profiles which specify the percentage levels of nutrients that should be present in pet foods. Also, pay close attention to your pet's health, your pet's age/life stage, and any life events (such as pregnancy) that may require a boost/change in nutrition. As always, consult your veterinarian if you have questions about supplements, and whether they'd be appropriate and beneficial for your unique pet. Be sure to monitor your pet for health changes after supplementing, and contact your veterinarian if you have questions or concerns.

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