

Treat-ing Your Dog Right

Treats are an essential part of doggie life, great for training sessions and for building a positive reaction to new or scary things. Treats don't have to undermine your dog's healthy diet—not if you follow some straightforward guidelines. First, only buy commercially made dog treats that don't contain preservatives or artificial color but do contain named fresh meats (e.g. "chicken" or "chicken meal," not simply "meat" or "meal") and vegetables. If grains appear on the ingredients panel, make sure they're whole—better yet, avoid grains altogether. Many treat companies now make grain-free options. Generally look for whole-food ingredients such as carrots, blueberries, and beef. Some preservatives are necessary, especially in chewy treats, so opt for natural ones like vitamins C and E (the latter is often listed as "mixed tocopherols") and avoid BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin, sodium nitrate, and other chemicals. Finally, don't forget that many dogs consider a cube of cheddar, a bit of leftover chicken, or a baby carrot a big treat, and there, you know exactly what you're dishing out.