

Pet Obesity Minpinmom

Dr. Andrew Jones in his email of July 7, 2010 states “Pet obesity is a growing epidemic, and many pet treats contain ingredients that contribute to the problem.” “The hidden danger in today’s pet treats is Sugar.”

Are treats for our pets a human concept or a pet natural behavior? We as pet parents love to reward pets for doing something good – sit, stay, potty outside or just because we think they are cute! We use food as a motivator when pets would love a good pet or praise as their reward and it won’t pack on the pounds like treats will! Our pets are adorable but Dr. Ernie Ward, DVM, founder of the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) states “One of the key reasons I became involved with fighting pet obesity was that I began seeing sugar added to pet treats.” As with us humans, sugar is an attractive (and unhealthy) nuisance. Dogs are VERY smart – we teach them if they sit on command we will give them a treat, and then they sit quickly, and we give another treat! The sugar in those treats adds up. “APOP estimates that 45 percent of the nation’s dogs and 58 percent of cats are overweight.”

The pet food industry is a “nearly \$2 billion in the United States in 2010” – the behavior they learned is that if their marketing “claims to help teeth” we will buy it. That marketing works! If we read the label and did not purchase anything that contained sugar or corn syrup in the ingredients, they would also quickly learn to replace it with something without those ingredients. Why not feed baby carrots, a limited daily supply of fresh apple slices, broccoli, or yam slices? They are much healthier for us and them as snacks!

Those that know me hear me frequently advise them to read the label! Reading your dog food and treat label is as important as reading the label of the food you feed your family. If I won’t eat it, chances are my dogs won’t get it either. Once you change your pets diet to a healthy food, you will see behavioral changes in your pet as well as health changes such as softer fur, less poop to pick up, sparkly eyes, etc.

Have you ever wondered what “meat by-products” actually are? Dr. Pitcairn describes “meat by-products” in his *Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats* “can actually mean poultry feather meal, connective tissues (gristle), leather meal (yes, leather, like that used to make belts or shoes), fecal waste from poultry and other animals, and horse and cattle hair.. Robert Abady, founder of the Robert Abady Dog Food Company, describes meat and bone meal as “generally comprised of ground bone, gristle, and tendons, and is the cheapest and least nutritious of the by-product meal, or fish meals.” “The same is true of lamb meal, poultry or chicken meal, or fish meal.”

What about carbohydrate sources? In the lower quality products carbohydrates usually come from empty-calorie sources such as sugar (sucrose), propylene glycol, and corn syrup contribute to obesity but generally do nothing to the health of pets eating it. Examples of other less desirable carbohydrates are:

Rice flour	Finely powdered, usually the end process of milling and of very low nutritional value
Beet sugar	The dried residue from the sugar beet
Corn gluten meal	Dried residue from corn after the removal of starch, germ, and bran. Little, if any, nutritional value.
Brewer's rice	Rice sections that have been discarded from the manufacturing of beer, which contain pulverized, dried, spent hops. Little, if any, nutritional value.
Rancid or moldy grains	Unacceptable for human use

Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats, Dr. Richard H. Pitcairn, DVM, PhD and Susan Hubble Pitcairn, p11, col. 2

Dr. Ward says “Numerous studies demonstrate that overfeeding sugar can create symptoms similar to drug addiction.” He goes on to state “A dog’s daily sweet treat may be contributing to overeating and other undesirable behaviors. This is why I call today’s high-sugar treats ‘kibble crack.’” Dr. Ward encourages veterinarians to educate your clients by encouraging them to look at ingredient lists – and skip the treats that list sugar or corn syrup as one of the first few ingredients. In dog food, 80% of the nutrition comes from the first six ingredients listed. If there is corn syrup, corn meal, corn or any processed grain product, it provides no nutritional value but instead, it turns straight to poop! It fills up the pets but gives them no nutritional value and provides pet parents with more exercise because they have more poop to scoop!

A healthy treat during the Sonoran summer is: 1 pound plain yogurt, 1 medium ripe banana, 2 heaping tablespoons honey and 2 heaping tablespoons creamy peanut butter. Beat together until well blended. You can freeze in ice cube trays for individual treats or you can spoon by tablespoons on your pets food once per day.

Become an avid label reader and remember that treats are a human concept. Dogs in the wild eat to keep their health and stamina up. They only eat when they are hungry – they don’t go in search of a treat! Baby carrots, string beans, broccoli and other healthy veggies are good treats in moderation! Remember, minpins can be chow hounds so moderation is key!!!!