

Pets Need Vitamins to Stay Healthy

Even the best diet may not give an animal everything it requires

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By SHAWN MESSONNIER / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

Dear Dr. Shawn: After reading *The Natural Health Bible for Dogs & Cats*, I know that you're a big believer in using supplements. But since I feed my dog what I think is a good natural diet, is supplementation still important?

Answer: I'm a big believer in feeding the proper diet AND combining the best diet with whatever supplements your pet requires. I'm assuming that your pet is healthy and does not have any specific needs that I should address. The foundation of any holistic health program starts with a natural diet, preferably free from by-products and chemicals. Even the best diet may not provide everything your pet needs to maintain health. This is because diets are formulated for the "average" pet, and I've yet to see an "average" pet. Evidence from studies supports the benefits of vitamin and mineral supplementation. This is especially true for pet foods that are not natural or holistic. Many foods lack nutritional enhancement, and the ingredients used are by-products from human-grade materials that aren't fit for human consumption and are deficient in important nutrients. The diet is a starting place, and supplements are used depending upon a pet's specific needs.

Here are some recommendations that will be true for all pets:

- The supplement should be produced by a company with a good track record. Ideally, the manufacturing company will have the stamp of approval from the National Animal Supplement Council (www.NASC.cc). The supplement should be scientifically formulated.
- The supplement should be formulated with the finest all-natural human-grade ingredients.
- Supplements should be economical to allow you to enhance your pet's diet and ensure the pet is getting all essential nutrients daily. A little bit of money spent maintaining health is better than spending a whole lot of money to treat illness.
- The supplement should be easy to give to your pet; using a supplement as a treat is better than having to force a pill down. There are many good supplements your doctor might recommend; one of my favorites that I recommend in my practice on a daily basis is by Pet-Togethers and is called PetCentrx "Vim & Vigor" it's a wellness formula for pets (<http://www.pettogethers.net/indynorth>). By using this high quality supplement, along with feeding a great diet, you're ensuring your pet's long term health and wellness.

Dr. Shawn Messonnier is the author of "8 Weeks to a Healthy Dog" and "The Natural Health Bible for Dogs & Cats." Send questions to Paws & Claws Animal Hospital, 2145 W. Park Blvd., Plano, TX, 75075, e-mail him at shawnvvet@sbcglobal.net

*This is the **only** supplement endorsed by Bark Busters, Dr. Shawn, and Pets Best Insurance.*