

Practical Nutrition for Large Breed Puppies

Introduction

Large-breed puppies generally grow more rapidly than smaller-breed dogs in order to achieve their adult weight of 50 pounds or more. Therefore, they need a diet that supports growth without allowing them to grow too quickly, a circumstance that can contribute to abnormal skeletal development.

Nutrition can play a key role in promoting healthy skeletal development. Limiting calcium intake is especially important in large breed puppies less than six months old. Studies show that large breed puppies fed a high-calcium diet are more likely to develop poor conformation and early lameness, in addition to other bone diseases. Research has also shown that dietary protein does not play an important role in the development of skeletal abnormalities, but high dietary energy and calcium intake can promote an excessive growth rate and an increased risk of developing skeletal problems.

How to select the right food for a large breed puppy

Look for ...

- **Reduced calcium Large Breed Formula** (formulated specifically for large and giant breed puppies) has 0.83 grams of calcium per cup, compared with 1.26 grams per cup in **Puppy Original Formula**, a diet more suitable for small and medium breed puppies)
- **Normal Calcium: Phosphorus Ratio (1.1:1 to 1.4:1)** **Puppy Large Breed Formula** has 1.26:1 calcium: phosphorus ratio
- **Reduced calories** **Puppy Large Breed Formula** has 367 kcal of metabolizable energy/cup, compared with 428 kcal/cup for **Puppy Original Formula**
- **Normal amount of moderately fermentable fiber** **Puppy Large Breed Formula** has no more than 5% of crude fiber (guaranteed analysis) and contains beet pulp (a moderately fermentable fiber) for maintaining intestinal health

Application

- **Puppy large breed formulas are a complete and balanced diet formulated to meet the unique nutritional needs of large-breed puppies.**
- **No supplements are necessary. In fact, feeding calcium, phosphorus or vitamin D supplements will alter the critical balance of minerals in the diets and may lead to developmental bone problems.**
- **Puppy large breed formulas should be fed from weaning up to 24 months, depending on the breed/expected mature size of the dog. After that time, the dog can be switched to the appropriate adult food.**