

Treat Your Pet Right

Beyond biscuits: how to choose the **BEST SNACKS** for your cat or dog

WHETHER IT'S caviar or cupcakes, most of us love an occasional treat. And so do our furry friends. But there's no reason treats can't be nutritious, says Marty Goldstein, a veterinarian at Smith Ridge Veterinary Center, in South Salem, New York, who cares for Martha's animals.

WHEN AND WHY

What makes a treat a treat if it's so healthful? The ritual around it, for one thing; hand-feeding an animal is a bonding opportunity for owner and pet. Some owners offer a treat at a particular time of day (for example, at human lunchtime or before bedtime) as a routine that the pet looks forward to. Size matters, too—a treat should never be large enough to substitute for a meal. It can be different in texture or another way from the food your pet normally eats.

You can also use treats as a reward when teaching a dog a command. But what about your independent, tricks-disdaining cat? Reinforce whatever good behavior your cat deigns to do on its own. Lurk by the scratching post or wherever you're hoping for good kitty conduct. When it comes, accompany your praise with a treat.

But don't overdo it. "Cats and dogs weren't meant to be grazing all day," says Tracie Hotchner, host of *Cat Chat* on Martha Stewart Living Radio and author of *The Dog Bible* and *The Cat Bible*. And don't give treats when the animal is bored;

it's a fast track to begging (and obesity). But you can engage pets' minds with toys that dispense treats—and that draw on the natural urge of animals to hunt, chew, fetch, bat, tug, twist, and ferret things out of holes.

TOP INGREDIENTS

For cats and dogs, "the emphasis should be on meat," Goldstein says. Cats in particular are obligate carnivores, which means that they must get their nutrition from meat (dogs' diets can be a bit more varied). Freeze-dried meat, organ meat, poultry, or fish are great options; the ingredient listing on the package should be simply 100 percent tripe, salmon, or whatever the protein source. Some brands to look for: Halo, Bravo, Dr. Harvey's, Solid Gold Health Products for Pets, Stella & Chewy's, and the Honest Kitchen.

Rawhide can cause digestive upset and often contains harsh chemicals. Better dog chew treats include dried beef tendons, beef trachea, and "bully sticks." Hotchner also recommends Churpi Chews, a hard jerky-style nonmeat treat containing milk, lime juice, and salt.

Biscuits can be another occasional option for dogs, but make sure they're small and don't contain wheat and corn. Carbs less likely to cause allergies or other problems include potato, sweet potato, and tapioca. (Natural Balance, Wagatha, EVO, and Cranimals all make grain-free dog cookies.)

fare play

Treat-dispensing toys aren't just fun. They also provide valuable mental stimulation for pets. (Wash them well after each use.)



Stuff this tough, bouncy dog toy with any treat. **Tux**, \$16, westpawdesign.com.



Dogs spin the levels of this toy to get rewarded. **Dog Tornado**, \$42, by Nina Ottosson, from pawlickers.com.



A feather topper makes this cat toy, which holds treats, even more enticing. **Funkitty Twist 'n Treat Teaser**, \$8, premier.com.

GO FISH

Look for high-quality snacks in your pet store—or your pantry.



IN YOUR KITCHEN

Your fridge and pantry also offer choices, but it's important to know that there are foods that pets should never eat, such as anything containing the artificial sweetener xylitol or more than trace amounts of garlic and onions. Grapes, raisins, chocolate, and macadamia nuts are unsafe for dogs.

You can give your pet a little piece of cheese or cooked meat or some peanut butter. For dogs, Hotchner also recommends a nighttime snack of a biscuit with a little yogurt. "It's a great way to end the day," she says, "since the probiotics in the yogurt encourage friendly bacteria and help them not wake up with a sour stomach." Some dogs enjoy raw or cooked vegetables, such as carrots, broccoli, or sugar snap peas. An oil- or water-packed sardine fillet makes a nice kitty delicacy—guaranteed to elicit purrs.



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