



Holistic Pet Wellness

AROMATHERAPY • NUTRITION • BODYWORK • GUIDANCE

Vitamin A - An Essential Nutrient for Dogs & Cats

The Role of Vitamin A in the Body

Vitamin A is a fat soluble vitamin that is critical for vision, bone formation, reproduction, skin health and immune system function. Vitamin A is almost only absorbed as retinol into the lymphatic system and then transported to the liver. This is important to understand especially for dogs and cats (cats in particular) because the type of Vitamin A that is supplied in the diet makes all the difference. More on this below.

Signs of Deficiency or Excess

Signs of deficiency include dysfunction of the epithelial cells (infection and dry skin), immune system issues, night blindness, infertility or miscarriage. Signs of excess (toxicity) include bleeding problems, skeletal malformations, slow growth, weight loss, skin thickening, and fractures. Vitamin A does have a safe upper limit for dogs and cats as it can cause toxicity if provided in the diet in excessive amounts.

Sources of Vitamin A

Plants do not contain Vitamin A but instead contain provitamins and carotenoids such as beta-carotene that have antioxidant properties and supply some retinol to dogs, but none to cats. Dogs can convert some beta-carotene from plant matter into a usable form of Vitamin A (retinol) but this percentage of conversion is very low. Cats cannot convert any beta-carotene into retinol so it must be provided to them in their diets.

Good Sources of Vitamin A for our pets includes:

- Liver
- Cod liver oil
- Egg yolk (not as good as the two listed above)

This does not mean that plant matter (veggies) that contain lots of beta-carotene shouldn't be fed or are not beneficial. They are but they are beneficial in a different way. That's why it's important to understand that veggies really aren't very beneficial at providing the form of Vitamin A that dogs and cats require.



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Sources

Burns, Kara; Wortinger, Ann. Nutrition and Disease Management for Veterinary Technicians and Nurses. Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2015