

ENZYME THERAPY for pets

A Key to Good Health

by Shawn Messonnier

Enzymes are among the most commonly used supplements for cats and dogs because they are widely beneficial. They support digestive health and enhance nutrient absorption, as well as reduce inflammation and boost overall wellness.

A nutrition school adage states, "If you have a question on your exam and don't know the answer, put down 'enzymes' and you'll likely be correct." The point is that enzymes made by the body for specific functions are essential to life because they affect nearly every physical or biological process.

Enzymes help normal, healthy pets use nutrients and support the righting of gastrointestinal disorders, whether involving simple vomiting, diarrhea, chronic or complete constipation, anal sac disorders or inflammatory bowel disease, regardless of cause. Because sick pets often suffer from reduced appetite and impaired digestion, enzyme supplements are often added to a dietetic regimen to improve their nutritional status.

Helpful enzymes include proteases, carbohydrases (like amylase) and lipases that break down proteins, carbohydrates and fats, respectively. Digestive enzymes are highly specific both to the type of food they act upon and the conditions under which they work. They can be derived from pancreatic, plant or microbial sources (bacteria or fungi).

While pancreatic enzymes activate mainly in the small intestines (being inactive in the stomach's lower pH environment), plant and microbial enzymes begin digesting foods in the stomach



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immediately after ingestion and likely even on the food being prepared, if the enzymes are added several minutes before they are eaten. Enzymes from microbial and plant origins have a broader spectrum of activity because they are stable and active through a wide pH range of 3.0 to 8.0.

Enzymes may be helpful for pets with *inflammatory conditions*, including arthritis, dermatitis, allergies, asthma and cancer. In such cases, they should not be administered with food, because otherwise they will be “used up” before the pet digests the food.

It’s also possible to use enzyme supplementation to reduce *excessive shedding* because enzyme supplementation is widely recognized to increase the

absorption of nutrients, some possibly involved in controlling hair growth. Some of these nutrients may be used in thyroid hormone synthesis, which can positively affect hair growth and reduce shedding.

A novel use for enzymes is to help pets practicing *coprophagia*, or the eating of their own or another animal’s feces. Adding the proper enzymes to the diet is believed to curb this problem, which could result from a nutrient deficiency caused by incomplete digestion and absorption. For pets with behavioral coprophagia, enzyme supplementation

is unlikely to help the problem but will still benefit the pet’s overall health.

The recommended dose by breed and weight is based upon experience, the label of a specific product and directions provided by the family veterinarian. Using enzymes according to a professional’s advice is safe, with rare to nonexistent side effects. Talk to the pet’s doctor about the best enzyme products to address individual needs and keep them healthy.

Shawn Messonnier, a doctor of veterinary medicine practicing in Plano, TX, is the author of The Natural Health Bible for Dogs & Cats and Unexpected Miracles: Hope and Holistic Healing for Pets. For more information, visit PetCareNaturally.com.

