

Seeking Quality Supplements

A good place to start looking for supplements for your dog is an independent pet store where the owner/workers have experience with the products, and additional information about them.

When choosing supplements for your dogs it's better to use supplements that were made for dogs because they list the correct dose on the label, which will eliminate your guesswork, and the manufacturer will have to be responsible if something adverse happens related to the administration of the product. Also remember, supplements made for dogs are manufactured by companies who are familiar with a dog's metabolism.

All natural products and organic products are the best, when available. Steer away from containing sugars or unnatural preservatives. Sugars are usually added for palatability and unnatural preservatives can have adverse effects. If you cannot pronounce an ingredient chances are you don't need it. The same holds true for supplements, as does for kibble, the fewer the ingredients the better. Using a powder as opposed to a pill has its advantages in the aspect that the powder will not have an excipient—the ingredients which are used to make up the pill. They are considered to be safe, but can sometimes cause a hidden allergic reaction.

Every ingredient should be listed. The label should also show the percent of each active ingredient for each dose/unit. This way you can be assured that the dog is getting the correct amount of the intended ingredient; and the proper dose thereby being able to allow you to compare other products with similar ingredients more easily.

All products should have expiration dates and lot numbers. Lot numbers are how a company can track batches of product made. If there is no lot number, a company cannot do a recall for specific batches.

All reputable companies should have their contact information on the label. If a company is not a member of NASC—see information below on NASC—you can contact the company and find out about its quality assurance program; who developed their products; and what customer they offer.

Any company that is professing "miracles" on their products, should be avoided. Supplement manufacturers are not allowed to promote claims that their products cure diseases or is a treatment for specific diseases/disorders. However, they are allowed to make statements that the supplement can have impact on certain structures or functions of the dog's body. For example, a company who manufactures glucosamine/chondroitin can say that the product contributes to healthy joints, but it cannot say that it cures osteoarthritis.

National Animal Supplement Council—NASC

One resource to help choose quality supplements would be NASC. The National Animal Supplement Council is an industry group dedicated to protecting and enhancing the health of companion animals and horses throughout the United States. Founded in 2001, NASC is an all-industry association, which includes stakeholders concerned with the issues surrounding the supply of supplements for Non-Human Food Chain Animals. Their guidelines were developed and had input from FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) and the American Association of Feed Control Officials (AAFCO).

NASC tries to determine which manufacturers are responsible, they try to insure standardized quality in the industry.

Manufacturers who are members of NASC are interested in promoting good health and good manufacturing practices. When NASC allows a manufacture to become a member, it does not guarantee the manufacturer lifetime membership—they must continue to follow a stringent set of guidelines and protocols set by NASC, or NASC will no longer allow them to continue as members.

NASCs requirements comprise of the following:

- A. Members have to have a quality manual in place, stating written standards for each of their operating procedures and for their production process control.
- B. Members must have a system in place where they document adverse events and complaints; so that they are continually monitoring and evaluating their products; and they are required to report all findings back to NASC periodically; even if their were not events, they have to report that information as well.
- C. Members have to follow specific guidelines on their labels for every products. Labels cannot even suggest that the product cures, prevents or diagnoses any disease. Members have to include any specific warning and cautionary statements recommended by the FDA's CVM and by the NASC Scientific Advisory Committee.
- D. Members must attend at least one NASC meeting every year so they are aware of all the new industry developments.

There are more than 50 supplement manufacturers that are members of NASC. Additionally, there are some companies that have passed an independent study, which allows their product to display, not only that they are NASC members, but also they can display the NASC Quality Seal.

For more information on NASC: National Animal Supplement Council, P.O. Box 2568, Valley Center, CA 92082; (760) 751-3360; www.nasc.cc