



Main Street Veterinary Services

2360 Main Street, PO Box 211 London, ON N6P 1P9

www.mainstreetvetservices.ca

(519)-203-2000

Our Top Three Supplements and Why We Recommend Them

Feeding a nutritious and balanced diet to our pets should be a top priority for all of us so you might be wondering why we recommend additional supplements, especially if our pets appear to be healthy? There are always going to be factors that are beyond our control when it comes to our pet's health and we want to stack the odds in our favour by giving them what we feel might help to head off any future health concerns. The top three supplements that we recommend for everyone are: pre/probiotics +/- digestive enzymes, omega 3 fatty acids and a multi-vitamin.

Probiotics/Digestive Enzymes:

It has been shown that a balanced intestinal microbiome is crucial to good health in all animals. Maintaining a healthy and balanced microbiome lays the foundation for long term good health and can help with managing chronic diseases. In today's world, so many things can have a negative impact on the microbiome, from the obvious factors like antibiotic use, to environmental influences, vaccination, the health of the mother's microbiome, as well as physical and emotional stress. The diet we feed can also impact our microbiome as some bacteria thrive (or do not thrive) on certain nutritional components. There is so much that has been discovered about the importance of a healthy microbiome and we are only scratching the surface of the knowledge that is needed to really understand the most effective way to use probiotic therapies. We know that a healthy microbiome contains a large variety of bacterial strains. For this reason, we use that as one of the criteria for choosing a probiotic. We want one with a variety of bacterial strains (unless we are specifically targeting for a known effect, such as anti-anxiety, where we may choose one very specific strain), preferably ones that are sourced from the same animal we are putting them in.

Digestive enzymes are important for digestion and we know that the processed diets of today lack the digestive enzymes of the diets that our pets evolved on. For some pets and some diets, digestive enzyme supplementation will help to further support a healthy digestive tract.

Omega 3 fatty acids:

There is a lot of hype about the importance of the omega 3 fatty acids in our diets today. The hype is there for good reason. It has been discovered that these fatty acids are vital for health in our mammalian systems because they have strong immune-modulating and anti-inflammatory properties. They have been shown to help with arthritis, heart disease, immune-mediated disease, cancers and other inflammatory disorders. They are also important components of almost all cell membranes and are considered essential in growth and development throughout the life cycle. The amount of omega 3 fatty acids that a body requires is affected by the ratio of omega 6 fatty acids to omega 3 fatty acids in the body. In today's society, most of our diets (and especially kibble based diets) are very high in omega 6 fatty acids which leads to a relative deficiency in omega 3 fatty acids. These fatty acids are very fragile and even when added to kibble diets, they have often oxidized and thus lost their value and can actually be harmful by the time they are served in your pet's dish. For this reason, it is also important to keep omega 3 fatty acids in the fridge and to replace the bottle every 4-6 weeks, even if the bottle is not yet empty. Adding a fresh source of omega 3 fatty acids is a great way to ensure your pet is actually benefiting from these important fats. The best sources of omega 3 fatty acids are fish oils. Flax seed is a great supplement, but our animal companions cannot convert it to the needed omega 3 fatty acids the same way that we can, so it is not a good substitution for a fish oil Omega 3.

Multivitamin:

The use of a multi-vitamin can be debatable when feeding a balanced diet. The reason for us to include it as a recommendation is because when diets are formulated, they are formulated to meet minimum levels of vitamins and minerals. This means that some of the more fragile vitamins that degrade quickly with time and exposure to air, may no longer be present in sufficient quantities by the time the food makes it to your pet's dish. In commercially prepared raw or homemade diets that have not undergone formulation testing or analysis, there is the chance for nutritional deficiencies. For example, it is hard in a raw diet, without the addition of hair, to achieve adequate levels of zinc unless it is specifically supplemented for. Zinc is known to be important in skin, and connective tissue and is now considered a required nutrient by AAFCO. Admittedly, adding in a multi-vitamin may or may not correct nutritional deficiencies in any diet as it will depend on the size of the deficit. It would be impossible to evaluate this without doing an analysis of every meal that was fed at the time that it was fed, but we add a multi-vitamin in hopes that it will cover our bases and give us a small piece of reassurance. Providing variety in our diets can also help decrease the chances of deficiencies in our diets. We do not need to have a completely balanced meal every single time to give us a balanced diet. The same holds true for our pets. As long as their meals balance over a 2 week time frame to give them all of their essential nutrients, they will benefit from variety in their diets. Feeding variety, within reason, can also decrease the chances of sensitivities developing to a food that is eaten at every meal.