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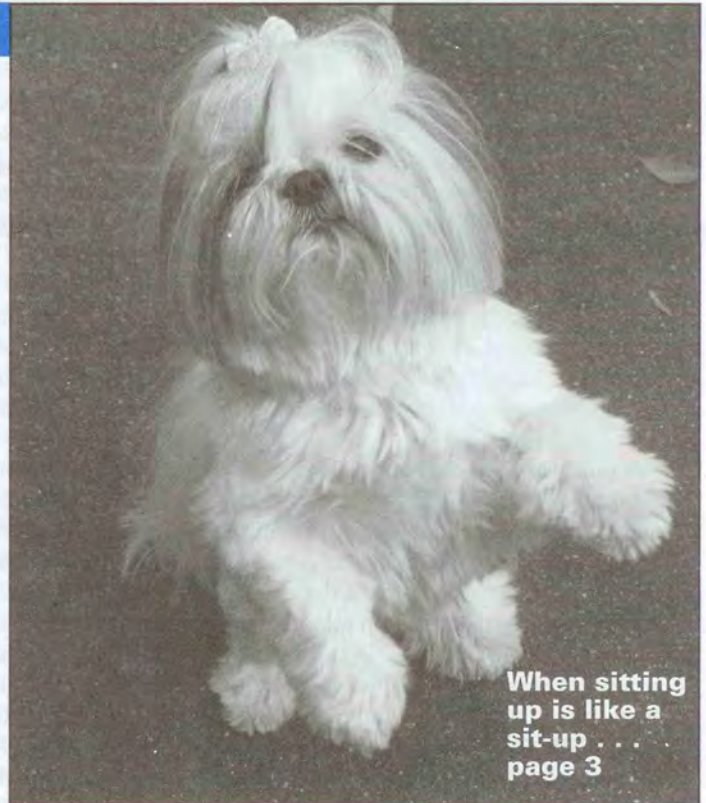
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A Real Treat

Don't undermine a terrific diet with chemical-laden, junky treats; there are too many healthy products from which to choose.

BY NANCY KERNS

Treats are, by definition, more delicious, more special, and less plentiful than ordinary food. Treats for humans are usually sweet, but dogs are less particular about dessert; treats that are sweet, meaty, fatty, or any combination of those three will delight and fascinate most canines.

Dogs are individuals, though, and if you have a discriminating dog, you may have to work to find treats that will reliably attract his interest – give him a reason to be a good dog, so to speak. Treats that echo the food he eats every day will not do!

But while a treat should be something special for the dog, it shouldn't undermine his health, or counter the positive effects of a healthy diet. Artificial preservatives and colors can cause cancer. Too many sweets can contribute to the development



The good news: Healthy, delicious treats are widely available. The bad news: Chemical-laden, unhealthy treats that are irresistible to dogs are even more widely available. Nothing new there! Just be a choosy consumer, read the product labels, and feed only healthy treats to your dog in moderation.

What you can do . . .

- Don't buy commercially made dog treats at the grocery store, unless you *also* do each of the following:
- Read the ingredients panel of any treat you consider buying. Pass it by if it contains artificial preservatives and/or colors.
- Check the ingredients list for foods your dog may be allergic to or intolerant of.
- Look for treats that contain whole grains and/or fresh meats, fruits, and vegetables.
- Buy organic products whenever possible.



of diabetes; fatty treats can trigger an attack of pancreatitis. And an excess of treats can pose serious problems. It can spoil the dog's appetite for healthier, nutritionally complete and balanced foods. If the treats contain ingredients to which the dog is allergic or intolerant, an excessive allotment can trigger a dramatic reaction. And, of course, a chronic excess of treats can cause obesity, which contributes to many other disease processes.

Regarding treats, then, the goals of the responsible dog owner are threefold:

- Make sure the treats you buy do not contain ingredients that are less than healthful.
- Look for a variety of treats that the dog enjoys.
- Feed treats to the dog in moderation, as a complement to his regular healthy diet.

WDJ's treat selection criteria

Faced with an endless array of treats with cute, appealing packages and clever names, how do we choose which products to bring home to our dogs? First, we seek out products with healthy, beneficial ingredients. We look for:

- **Whole-food ingredients.** This means whole, named meats, organs, or meat meals – for example (and in order of our preference), chicken, chicken liver, or chicken meal. If the treat contains grain, we'd rather see whole grains than grain "fractions" (whole wheat, rather than wheat flour, wheat bran, or wheat starch). The same goes for fruits or vegetables; apples, blueberries, carrots, sweet potatoes, and the like are delicious, healthy additions to treats.
- **Organic ingredients.** A product that contains only organic ingredients flies to

the top of our list, but one organic ingredient is better than none. The more organic ingredients, the better.

■ **Natural preservatives – or fresh products without preservatives.** Vitamins C and E (the latter is often listed as “mixed tocopherols”) are effective and safe preservatives. Many treats contain no preservatives at all; that’s fine, but the date of manufacture and/or expiration date should be easy to find and interpret.

■ **Natural, food-based sweeteners.** We disapprove of the use of sweeteners in dog food, but we’re talking about *treats* – something the dog may not get every day, and something he’ll get only a few of. Applesauce, molasses, and honey are better than artificial sweeteners.

Next, read the ingredients list with an eye toward what you **DON’T** want to see in your dog’s diet, such as:

■ **Low-quality proteins and fats; poor-quality animal-based ingredients.** Meat by-products are even less excusable in a treat than they are in a food. Generic or unnamed sources (such as “animal fat” or “animal protein”) are even worse. Yuck!

■ **Artificial colors.** Dogs don’t care whether their food is blue or brown.

Artificial colors fall into the “absolutely unnecessary chemicals” category.

■ **Artificial or low-quality palatability enhancers.** Treats are sort of like candy; they should taste better than the dog’s regular food, but they shouldn’t contain anything *bad* for the dog. We suggest avoiding treats that use salt as a flavor enhancer, as well as treats that contain sweeteners such as corn syrup, sucrose, and ammoniated glycyrrhizin (in favor of molasses, say, or honey), and artificial flavoring (such as barbecue flavor or artificial smoke flavor). Dogs like the taste of so many healthy and natural foods; there really is no good reason to use artificial flavor enhancers.

■ **Artificial preservatives,** such as BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin.

Chewy treats invite the most chemicals, especially because most contain some sort of meat, which needs to be preserved. Some chemicals preserve the meat *and* help it maintain its nice red or pink color (keep it from turning grey), such as sodium nitrite, commonly found in preserved meats (and implicated in pancreatic cancer in humans).

Final notes

We hinted earlier that you have to read the label of any item that crosses your dog’s

lips. Don’t be scared; it’s not that difficult! Compare the labels of the treats below; it’s really obvious which products are healthy and which aren’t.

Keep track of the ingredients that are in your dog’s food and treats. If your dog has symptoms of food allergy – such as severe itching (leading to frequent hotspots), goopy eyes, frequently infected ears – or certain ingredients give him painful gas or diarrhea, you’ll naturally want to avoid treats that contain these ingredients, even in small amounts.

Do check the packaging of any treat for any indication of its country of origin. It’s worth a call to a treat’s manufacturer to ask about the country of origin of all of the ingredients in their products.

To fully understand what it means (or may not mean, as the case may be) when a food or treat label indicates that “human grade” ingredients are used, see page 12.

Finally, be aware that we do *not* rate or rank-order the treats we have highlighted as examples of good products on the following pages. A treat either meets our selection criteria (outlined above) or it does not; there is no “top pick” or “best on the list.” Don’t fret if *your* top pick is not on our list; if it meets our selection criteria, it’s as good as anything we’ve highlighted on the following pages. Happily, there are many more good products than we could ever list.

Hallmarks of Quality	Avoid Products with These Attributes
<p>The label of this treat says it is the “lamb & salmon” variety, and what do you know? The ingredients list starts with lamb and salmon. Yay!</p> <p>Source of glycerin (used to maintain moistness) is disclosed</p> <p>Grains are whole, not flours</p> <p>Natural sweetener</p> <p>Natural flavor enhancers</p> <p>Whole, healthy fruits and vegetables</p> <p>Natural acidifier</p> <p>Natural preservative</p> <p>Naturally derived preservative</p> <p>Lamb, Salmon, Ground Brown Rice, Oatmeal, Vegetable Glycerin, Guar Gum, Cane Molasses, Carrots, Sea Salt, Natural Smoke Flavor, Garlic, Blueberries, Flaxseed, Sweet Potatoes, Apples, Phosphoric Acid, Sorbic Acid, Mixed Tocopherols.</p>	<p>A grain, not bacon nor cheese, is first on the ingredients list.</p> <p>Corn gluten meal and corn are low-cost sources of protein.</p> <p>Refined sweetener.</p> <p>More lower-cost grains.</p> <p>“Meat?” No species? Eek!</p> <p>Artificial colors are bad; Red 40 is the worst.</p> <p>Sodium nitrite and BHA are among the worst artificial preservatives.</p> <p>There is more water in this “bacon” treat than bacon.</p> <p>Ground Wheat, Corn Gluten Meal, Wheat Flour, Ground Yellow Corn, Water, Sugar, Glycerin, Soybean Meal, Hydrogenated Starch Hydrolysate, Bacon (preserved with sodium nitrite), Salt, Bacon Fat (preserved with BHA), Meat, Phosphoric Acid, Sorbic Acid, Dried Cheese Powder, Calcium Propionate, Natural and Artificial Smoke Flavors, Added Color Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6, Blue 1.</p>
<p>This treat? It’s Wellness Lamb & Salmon Wellbites.</p>	<p>This treat? It’s Purina’s Bacon & Cheese Beggin’ Strips.</p>

Samples of Top-Quality Cookie-Type Treats

BELLYRUBS DOG TREATS

Meyer Country Farms, Scottsdale, AZ
(480) 614-1869; meycountryfarms.com

Organic, vegetarian treats are available in two flavors. No preservatives.

BREW BREW BRAND ORGANIC WHOLE FOOD DOG SNACKS

Brew Brew Brand, Driggs, ID
(208) 709-2739; brewbrewbrand.com

Artisan bakery makes treats made with local, organic ingredients.

BUDDY BISCUITS

Cloud Star Corporation, San Luis Obispo, CA
(800) 361-9079; cloudstar.com

Available in a wide variety of flavors and sizes, from tiny "Tricky Trainers" to Itty Bitty Buddy Biscuits, to the generously sized Buddy Biscuits. Cloud Star offers several meat-based cookies as well as vegetarian varieties, some organic cookies, and a new line of chewy biscuits.

CHARLEE BEAR DOG TREATS

Charlee Bear Farms, Inc., Madison, WI
(800) 880-2327; charleebear.com

We love these tiny treats for training; they are only three calories each! Each of the two flavors (liver and cheese/egg) has a very short, simple ingredients list.



DOGGIE DIVINES

Brunzi's Best Inc., Garrison, NY
(845) 734-4490; highlands.com/Brunzi/

Most ingredients in the four different varieties are organic. Cute packaging, great for gifts.

DUDLEY'S DO RIGHT TRAINING TREATS

Bark Stix, Pt. Richmond, CA
(510) 235-2430; barkstix.com

Seven different lines of treats baked into a variety of shapes and sizes, including our favorite small sizes. Only organic flours are used. No preservatives.

GRANDMA LUCY'S DOG TREATS

Grandma Lucy's, Irvine, CA
(800) 906-5829; grandmalucys.com

Dozens of different freeze-dried healthy treats with simple but compelling ingredients. None of the products contain preservatives. And absolutely the coolest dog product website we've seen!

HEALTHY DOG TREATS

The Hand That Feeds You Healthy Dog Bakery, St. Michaels, MD
(443) 799-9721; healthydogbakery.com

Six varieties with simple ingredients lists, and no preservatives.

HEIDI'S HOMEMADE DOG TREATS

Heidi's Homemade Dog Treats, Columbus, OH
(877) 738-7622; heidisbakery.com

A wide variety of certified organic muffins, biscotti, cookies, and bagels for dogs, all meat-free. Local ingredients used when available. No preservatives.

HENRY & SONS VEGETARIAN COOKIES

Henry & Sons, San Jose, CA
(877) 473-7637; henryandsons.com

This company describes itself as the "pioneer in wheat-free, vegetable-based dog treats." We like all four varieties of these cookies for their light texture: not too hard to break into small pieces but satisfyingly crunchy for our dogs.

HOWLIN' GOURMET

Dancing Paws Bakery, Tustin, CA
(888) 644-7297; dancingpaws.com

Only healthy ingredients (some organic) and no preservatives in any of the three varieties.

LATKA'S TREATS

Latka's Treats LLC, New York, NY
(917) 570-4796; delicioustreats.com

Small treats available in three varieties; none contain preservatives. "Lap Dog Biscuits" are larger.

LICK'N CRUNCH

Three Dog Bakery, Kansas City, MO
(800) 487-3287; threedog.com

These irresistible cookies look just like Oreos, but are made with dog-healthy carob. All the ingredients are truly human-grade; cookies are made in a USDA bakery. One criticism: Like many cookies for humans, these are made with a partially hydrogenated vegetable oil.

LIVER BISCOTTI

Premier Pet Products, Midlothian, VA
(800) 795-5930; liverbiscotti.com

This company was recently purchased by Premier Pet Products. We've appreciated these treats for a long time, for their simple ingredients lists and small size (great for training.)

MOTHER NATURE NATURAL DOG BISCUITS

Natura Pet Products, Santa Clara, CA
(800) 532-7261; naturapet.com

Biscuits are made with whole grains, meat or meat meals, fruits, and vegetables, and without preservatives. Offerings include eight flavors, four sizes (mini, small, regular, and jumbo), and treats for puppies.

NATURE NOSH

Nature Nosh, LLC, Los Angeles, CA
(310) 980-2220; nature-nosh.com

Two varieties (beef liver, chicken liver) of these nice, small treats are available; all ingredients are organic.

NEWMAN'S OWN PREMIUM DOG TREATS

Newman's Own Organics, Aptos, CA
(800) 865-2866; newmansownorganics.com

Four varieties are available; many ingredients are organic.

OLD MOTHER HUBBARD DOG BISCUITS

Old Mother Hubbard, Chelmsford, MA
(800) 225-0904; oldmotherhubbard.com

A staggering 25 varieties of treats, available in 6 lines (our favorite line is the "gourmet pouch training treats," which are small. All of the treats are made with quality ingredients.

SIMON & HUEY'S DOGGONED TASTY TREATS

Simon & Huey's Tasty Treats, LLC, Seattle, WA
(888) 757-9663; simonandhuey.com

Available in many flavors and sizes (we lost count at forty-something) including "Soft and Tiny" training treats. Simple ingredients lists in a wide and creative variety of uncommon flavors.

SMOOCHES FOR POOCHES

The Honest Kitchen, San Diego, CA
(858) 483-8559; thehonestkitchen.com

Available in just one variety so far, but what a nice ingredient list! Only human-grade – truly "edible" quality (see page 12) – ingredients are used. No preservatives.



SOJOS GOOD DOG TREATS
Sojourner Farms, Minneapolis, MN
(888) 867-6567; sojos.com

These darling small treats are available in four varieties, with simple ingredients and no preservatives.

TOY TEMPTATIONS
Dogchewz NYC, New York, NY
(212) 752-5855; dogchewz.com

Intended for small dogs, but small treats are perfect for training. Most of the ingredients in each of the six flavors are organic. No preservatives.

WAGATHA'S BISCUITS FOR DOGS
Wagatha's, Manchester Center, VT
(802) 367-1010; wagathas.com

Available in four varieties; all are made with human-grade ingredients, many of them organic. No preservatives.



WAGGERS DOG TREATS
Pet Central, Sylvania, OH
(888) 892-7393; waggers.com

Available in beef liver/carrot (wheatless), peanut butter/oats (meatless), and chicken/cheese (sweetless) varieties; something for everyone!

WELLNESS WELLBARS
Old Mother Hubbard, Inc., Chelmsford, MA
(800) 225-0904; wellnesspetfood.com

Available in three varieties, all wheat-free.

WET NOSES HERBAL DOG TREATS
Wet Noses Dog Food Co., Snohomish, WA
(866) WET-NOSE; wet-noses.com

No wheat, corn, or soy in any of the five varieties.

Samples of Top-Quality Meat-Based or Jerky-Style Treats

CANINE CAVIAR WILD ALASKAN SALMON
Canine Caviar Pet Foods, Inc., Costa Mesa, CA
(800) 392-7898; caninecaviar.com

Sole ingredient: Dried Alaskan wild salmon.

DOGSWELL PREMIUM DOG TREATS
Dogswell, LLC, Los Angeles, CA
(888) 559-8833; dogswell.com

A wide variety of jerky-style dried meats. Meant to be functional foods; added ingredients such as herbs, spices, or vitamins are meant to address arthritis symptoms, cardiac problems, bad breath, hyperactivity, or skin.

DR. BECKER'S BITES
Dr. Becker's Bites, Cedar Falls, IA
drbeckersbites.com

Beef variety contains only USDA beef liver and kidney; bison variety contains free-range, grass-fed bison liver and heart.

DR-CHEW SWEET POTATO TREATS
Landy Corporation, Federal Way, WA
(253) 838-1427; dr-chew.com

Not a meat-based treat (but not a cookie, either!). A single-ingredient treat: Healthy, chewy, sun-dried sweet potato. Cool!



ETTA SAYS! MEATY TREATS
Etta Says!, Seattle, WA
(866) 439-3882; ettasays.com

Freeze-dried beef liver, chicken liver, or lamb liver.

LIV-A-LITTLES
Halo Purely for Pets, Tampa, FL
(800) 426-4256; halopets.com

Single ingredient freeze-dried chicken, salmon, beef, and lamb.

NOTHING BUT . . . TREATS
A Place for Paws, Columbiana, OH
(800) 354-4216; aplaceforpaws.com

Eight varieties of all-meat, single-ingredient dehydrated treats.

REAL FOOD TOPPERS
Complete Natural Nutrition, Marshalltown, IA
(800) 807-7335; realfoodtoppers.com

Eight varieties of freeze-dried treats; most contain only a single ingredient. As the name suggests, these are intended to be used as a top-dressing on your dog's food, but they work as treats even better.

ROSIE'S REWARDS
Rosebud, Inc., Pray, MT
(877) ROSEBUD; rosiesrewards.com

Single ingredient: Dried beef.

WAGGERS CHAMPION CHIPS
Pet Central, Sylvania, OH
(888) 892-7393; waggers.com

A jerky-style treat made of beef lung.

WELLNESS PURE REWARDS AND WELLNESS WELLBITES
Old Mother Hubbard, Inc., Chelmsford, MA. (800) 225-0904; wellnesspetfood.com

"Pure Rewards" are chewy, moist meaty treats (20 percent moisture) available in four varieties; two contain a sole meat source and the other two contain two meat sources each (none contain meat meal). "Wellbites" are similar but more moist (30 percent moisture) and each of the four varieties contains two types of meat (and no meat meal) and whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.



WHOLE LIFE PET TREATS
Whole Life Pet Products, Pittsfield, MA
(877) 210-3142; wholelifepet.com

Six varieties of single-ingredient, freeze-dried meats.

ZIWIPEAK GOOD DOG TREATS
ZiwiPeak Ltd., North Island, New Zealand
064-7-575-2426; ziwipeak.com

Natural, chewy (15 percent moisture) meat rewards, available in six types, including some uncommon venison-based varieties.

ZUKE'S TREATS FOR DOGS
Zuke's, Durango, CO
(866) 985-3364; zukes.com

Zuke's offers a wide array of moist treats that contain whole meats, grains, vegetables, fruits, and beneficial supplements.

