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SHOPPING AROUND

For Fido on a Diet

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Amid growing demand for nutritious pet food, the newest batch of dog treats is providing a way to reward your pet without giving the animal a spare tire.

Many manufacturers are launching dog treats that are low in fat. But would our pets eat them? One of our test dogs, a golden retriever named Clyde (pictured), gobbled up the low-fat treats as he would regular ones -- though his digestion was a bit off afterward. Our other test dog, Cody, also a golden retriever, was a bit more skeptical.



Pet obesity is increasingly becoming a concern for owners, says Tony Buffington, professor of veterinary clinical sciences at Ohio State University, who says he is seeing it more often among his patients. Recommended calorie intake can vary drastically depending on the size of the dog. For pet owners who live in "urban sedentary environments," he recommends a diet that is lower in calories. In general, treats should be used sparingly -- only as rewards or to stimulate physical activity.

According to the Association of American Feed Control Officials guidelines, low-fat, dry dog food must contain no more than a 9% fat content. Here's a look at our test of four of the latest low-fat options.

Blue Dog Bakery Live Well Super Premium Natural Low-Fat Dog Treats

Price/Availability: \$4.69 to \$4.99 for 16 oz.; retailers include Food Emporium, Waldbaum's, and ShopRite. See www.bluedogbakery.com for a list.

Calorie/Fat Content: About 70 to 100 calories per treat, depending on the size; 9% fat.

Comment: The treats come in various animal shapes and are made with peanuts, carrots, sweet potatoes, apples, broccoli and spinach, among other things. Clyde scarfed down a bear-shaped biscuit and licked up the crumbs.

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Old Mother Hubbard Just Vegg'n Low-Fat Dog Biscuits

Price/Availability: \$4.79 for 20 oz.; see www.oldmotherhubbard.com for retailers.

Calorie/Fat Content: About 10 calories per treat; 3% fat.

Comment: Contains sweet potatoes, oatmeal, carrots and apples. But when we put a treat down in front of our test dog Cody (usually a voracious snacker), he ignored it. He eventually ate it after some coaxing.

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Fromm's Four-Star Low-Fat Cranberry Liver Treats

Price/Availability: \$2.99 to \$3.99 for six oz.; see www.frommfamily.com for a list of retailers.

Calorie/Fat Content: About one calorie per treat; 4% fat.

Comment: These treats, which are small in size, are good for training dogs. Contains wheat flour, cranberries, liver, salt and garlic powder. Clyde enjoyed them, although he seemed to prefer the bigger treats when given the option.

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Three Dog Bakery Low-fat Apple Oatmeal Bark'n Fetch Biscuits

Price/Availability: \$5.25 for 16 oz.; Three Dog Bakery locations, Wal-Mart, and Walgreens. See www.threedog.com for retailers.

Calorie/Fat Content: Not listed and manufacturer refused to say; 8% fat.

Comment: Contains whole wheat flour, rolled oats, apples, molasses, cinnamon and rosemary extract. Clyde downed these as well.

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