Natural Pet Food Group

THE BENEFITS OF A HIGH-MEAT, HIGH-PROTEIN DIET FOR DOGS

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High-meat, high-protein canine diets deliver superior amino acid quality and digestibility, which support lean muscle mass, metabolic efficiency, joint stability, skin and coat quality, and healthy ageing. Modern reviews and tracer studies indicate that adult and senior dogs benefit from higher amounts of high-quality animal protein than traditionally assumed, with seniors often requiring proportionally more to offset age-related sarcopenia. These outcomes are strengthened when animal proteins are paired with marine omega-3 fatty acids, joint-supportive nutrients, and balanced fibre/pre- or postbiotic strategies.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY A HIGH-MEAT, HIGH PROTEIN DIET?

A "high-meat" diet refers to complete and balanced formulas in which animal ingredients dominate the ingredient deck and where crude protein levels are high and largely sourced from animal meats, organs, and fish. Such formulas typically provide approximately 40% protein on an as-fed basis, like in **K9 Natural's Baked & Coated** range, with the first eight ingredients being animal-derived, this is an approach intended to maximise amino acid quality and bioavailability.



BENEFITS OF A HIGH PROTEIN DIET

High protein, high meat diets provide concentrated, highly digestible amino acids that play a pivotal role in supporting metabolic efficiency, and maintaining a healthy body composition, and long-term physiological resilience in dogs. Animal proteins have an amino acid composition that closely matches canine requirements, facilitating efficient nutrient utilisation and reducing digestive burden relative to lower quality or plant-based proteins. This is particularly important for maintaining lean body mass, a key determinant of mobility, metabolic rate and healthy ageing; evidence shows senior dogs experience increased protein turnover and therefore may benefit from elevated, high-quality protein to mitigate sarcopenia and preserve functional strength.

Beyond musculoskeletal health, higher protein diets naturally enhance satiety, reducing the risk of obesity and its related increased inflammatory load. Protein also supports thermogenesis and contributes to stable postprandial energy release, promoting sustained vitality throughout the day. Additionally, animal proteins supply bioavailable micronutrients, especially iron, zinc, copper and B-complex vitamins. These micronutrients underpin immune competence, antioxidant defences, oxygen transport and healthy skin turnover.

When combined with omega-3 fatty acids and functional ingredients such as New Zealand Green Lipped Mussel, high protein diets create a synergistic nutritional platform that reinforces joint comfort, digestive efficiency, and whole-body wellbeing across life stages.

PROTEIN QUALITY & DIGESTIBILITY: WHY ANIMAL PROTEINS MATTER



Dogs require indispensable amino acids for tissue turnover, enzymes, hormones, immune proteins, and structural keratin and collagen. Animal-based proteins provide amino acid profiles and bioavailability that more closely match canine requirements than plant sources, improving utilisation for muscle and connective tissue maintenance. Recent scientific reviews emphasise the importance of protein quality across life stages, while amino-acid metabolism work in dogs underlines superior bioavailability from animal proteins.

LEAN MASS, PERFORMANCE & RECOVERY



A consistent benefit of high-meat nutrition is preservation of lean body mass. Elevated, high-quality animal protein supports muscle protein synthesis (MPS), repair after activity, and overall musculoskeletal resilience. In adult and senior dogs, maintaining lean body mass is linked to mobility, strength and metabolic health, with modern tracer studies in senior dogs showing whole-body protein turnover dynamics that justify robust protein inclusion to counterbalance age-related losses.

HEALTHY AGEING



Ageing dogs experience progressive lean body mass loss (sarcopenia), with evidence indicating that senior animals may require up to approximately 50% more protein than younger adults to preserve muscle mass and function. High-meat formulas provide abundant essential amino acids, including leucine and lysine, that help sustain lean body mass, which in turn supports balance, mobility and quality of life in older dogs.

JOINT & CONNECTIVE TISSUE SUPPORT



Lean body mass acts as a biomechanical stabiliser around joints; therefore, high-meat diets indirectly support joint health by maintaining muscular support. When paired with marine omega-3 fatty acids (EPA/DHA) which are commonly included alongside animal proteins in high-meat formulas, the inflammatory environment around joints is further moderated. This also complements cartilage-supportive ingredients such as New Zealand Green Lipped Mussels which are used in K9 Natural recipes. Controlled trials using green lipped mussels show improvements in mobility indices versus placebo, supporting its role within high-meat, omega-3 fatty acid-inclusive diets.

SKIN & COAT: KERATIN SUPPLY + ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS



Hair is approximately 95% protein; high-meat diets deliver the sulphur amino acids (e.g., cysteine, methionine) required for keratin production, while the B-vitamins naturally present in animal tissues support epidermal cell turnover. In parallel, marine omega-3 fatty acids reduce production of arachidonic-acid–derived mediators and have been associated with improved pruritus scores and coat quality in controlled studies, while dietary linoleic acid underpins ceramide production and reduced trans epidermal water loss. Together, these mechanisms explain the visible coat benefits often seen on high-meat, omega-3 fatty acid-inclusive diets.

CARDIOMETABOLIC CONSIDERATIONS



Properly formulated complete diets have maintained normal cardiac biomarkers and echocardiographic parameters in long-term studies in healthy dogs. High-meat formulas naturally deliver taurine and taurine precursors (methionine/cysteine), which support normal cardiac muscle function and preserves lean mass, which further contributes to overall cardiometabolic resilience.

DIGESTIVE HEALTH & MICROBIOME COMPATIBILITY



High meat diets built on premium animal proteins offer superior digestibility compared with plant based or lower quality protein sources, enabling dogs to efficiently break down and absorb essential amino acids needed for muscle maintenance, metabolic processes, and tissue repair. Animal derived proteins such as beef, lamb, poultry, and fish, provide amino acid profiles that closely match canine requirements and are highly digestible, meaning they are more readily utilised by the body. This reduces undigested residue in the gut and supports optimal stool quality. This is a key advantage of **K9 Natural's Baked & Coated** architecture, where the first eight ingredients are always animal based, ensuring a highly bioavailable protein foundation that supports overall digestive comfort and whole-body health.

MICRONUTRIENT DENSITY FROM ANIMAL INGREDIENTS



Beyond protein, animal-based proteins contribute bioavailable iron, zinc and copper and a spectrum of B-vitamins that support tissue oxygenation, keratin formation, pigment maintenance and enzymatic antioxidant systems—cofactors frequently highlighted in dermatology and performance contexts.

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