



FISH OILS: THEIR IMPORTANCE IN OUR PETS

Monthly Newsletter

June 2014

Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids are considered essential for various stages of life in dogs and cats. They cannot be synthesized in the body and, if deficient, can be associated with many clinical abnormalities.

Linoleic acid (LA) is the main dietary source for Omega 6 fatty acids. The Omega 6 fatty acids are profoundly important in cutaneous (skin) protection of the body, providing the first defense against multiple environmental pathogens.

As metabolites of Alpha Linolenic Acid (ALA) with Eicosapentaenoic Acid (EPA) and Docosahexaenoic Acid (DHA), ALA is the main plant dietary source for Omega 3 fatty acids. Evidence suggests Omega 3's are essential for normal development of the nervous system, retinal tissue, and for a normal inflammatory response.

Uses of Fish Oils in Our Pets:

Virtually any primary skin disease results in secondary abnormalities in the skin barrier. Pets with allergic dermatitis and inflammation will greatly benefit from Omega 3/Omega 6 fatty acids with EPA and DHA. Combining an Omega 3 fatty acid (EPA/DHA) with an antihistamine and topical therapy will lower the dose of steroids in our pets. Dosing: 40 mg of EPA per kg of body weight and 66 mg of combined EPA and DHA per kg of body weight.

Omega 3 fatty acid metabolite DH is needed for development of the nervous system and the retina in puppies and kittens. DHA from fish oils provides superior benefits and is now recommended to be provided in the diet during gestation, suckling and post weaning for optimal neurological development. DHA also increases memory and training in puppies.

Evidence demonstrates that Omega 3 fatty acids help support a normal inflammatory response and cartilage degradation associated with joint disease. Fish oils used with COX inhibitors (NSAIDs like Carprofen and Metacam) are extremely beneficial. Dosing is higher for this disease: 50-100 mg of EPA and DHA per kg of body weight per day.

In Addition, Fish Oils:

- Support normal cardiovascular function in dogs.
- Support normal renal function in dogs and cats. Omegas will decrease glomerular hypertension and increase survival times. A dose of 60-75 mg EPA and DAH per kg per day is advisable.
- Lessen idiopathic hyperlipidemia in dogs.
- Lessen inflammatory bowel disease in dogs.
- Provide adjunctive support for mammary cancer in dogs and cats, and lymphoma in dogs.
- Support joint health and fight obesity in cats.



Why not use human fish oils?

- *it is almost impossible to interpret the labels and components.
- *Quality is variable amongst human over-the-counter products.
- *The form of the oil may not be listed. Although most are triglycerides, there are now many ethyl esters sold with LOW bioavailability.
- *The fish source and husbandry practices are not commonly indicated.
- *The gelatin source is not known.
- *There is no way to know what type of purification process and testing was done.

What Fish Oils to Use:

Fish oils should be fully tested for heavy metals (especially PCB's, mercury and dioxins). They should also be tested for EPA and DHA levels. These are the critical components in a fish oil product – reporting a total amount of fish oil or total Omega 3's doesn't tell one about these components and there is no regulatory requirement to list the components. For many products, as much as 5-6 times the label dose would be required to reach what has been demonstrated to be effective for our dogs and cats. It is mandatory that the EPA/DHA level appear on the label and a calculation is performed to give the proper dose based on your pet's weight.



All fish oils are not the same. We recommend Omega-3 from Nordic Naturals & Welactin from Nutrimax.