

hours of exercise. At least two hours should follow exercise before feeding. In addition to perhaps increasing the risk of GDV, ingestion of food prior to exercise dehydrates the dog, raises the body temperature and can create intestinal discomfort. There is no advantage to feeding the hunting dog prior to the hunt — only disadvantages. I feed adult dogs once a day in the evening.

I asked Reynolds for tips on proper feeding. "I encourage clients to become familiar with body - condition scoring," he said. "This scale gives them criteria for keeping their dogs in an ideal weight range. I encourage them to measure the food with an eight - ounce cup so that an accurate amount can be fed daily."

Athletic dogs do best on foods with high protein/fat ratios rather than foods high in carbohydrates. By being aware of the ideal body score, gradual adjustments by one - quarter to one - half cup can be made on weekly intervals as increases in physical training dictate. "

I recommend feeding adult dogs once daily at a time when they can be observed for a while for any signs of indigestion or bloating after their meal. Additionally, do not feed for two hours after exercise, do not feed a dehydrated animal before he has a chance to be rehydrated, and do not exercise a dog for four hours after eating."

Dogs that are in the ideal weight range live longer and have less incidence of diabetes, arthritis and other associated signs of aging than those dogs that are allowed to eat to the point of obesity."

The body - condition scoring that Reynolds refers to can be found online by entering "canine body condition score" into your preferred search engine. In addition, Purina's Website has a chart showing body - condition score that provides a visual reference of ideal weight.

Dr. Brian Zanghi is a research scientist in the Molecular Biology Group at the Nestlé Research Center, in St. Louis. Zanghi joined Purina in 2005 and maintains a research program in molecular nutrition and cellular nutrition focused on gut health, aging and physical performance. I asked him to comment on feeding schedules, GVD, recommended fat and protein levels, feeding wet, and probiotics.

"Optimally, typical feeding for hardworking dogs should be once a day and offered after exercise for the day," Zanghi said. "Ideally this should be no sooner than 30 minutes after exercise to let the dog's breathing and heart rate recover. Rehydration is best immediately after exercise, along with periodic hydration during the exercise. Feeding once a day should also be cautioned if the feeding amount is particularly high to retain body weight

for a really hard - working dog. (For example, if a 60 - pound dog needs six to eight cups a day in a situation where it is hunting/working almost every day for several hours a day ). In this case a customized strategy is required, with the majority of food fed after work but a second smaller portion a few hours after the main meal."

Regarding torsion: "This question is not answered so simply, or the veterinary community would know what triggers it and how to avoid it. It is multifactorial, and it is still unclear why it happens. Some or all of many factors can put a dog at higher risk, and these include a genetic predisposed link, deep - chested body structure, eating before exercise, eating from a raised food bowl, eating large meals, dogs that gulp their food or eat very rapidly, and dogs fed a high - fat diet, though this is likely related to exercise and possibly eating before exercise ." Regarding fat and protein: " A typical performance formula with 20 - percent fat is ideal for most hard - working dogs. A performance formula is optimal with 30 - percent protein. A 30/20 performance food should be fed all year to optimize a hunting dog's metabolism. This keeps the muscles metabolically conditioned to allow pre - season physical conditioning and endurance to be optimized and ramped up quicker. For owners who only work their dogs during the hunting season, always reduce portion size to accommodate a lower activity level in the spring and summer, as appropriate to keep the dog in good body condition. A dog's activity level and food amount at the end of hunting season will undoubtedly be greater than during the off - season."

Regarding probiotics : "Not all probiotics are created equal, and different favorable bacteria have different benefits to pets and people. Probiotics with gut - stress protective properties are best used to minimize risk or severity of gut upset or diarrhea if and when the dog is exposed to some type of pathogen or travel stress. For hunting dogs there are several scenarios to consider. Optimally, a probiotic like Fortiflora would be added to the food throughout the entire hunting season for maximum protection. Alternatively, in preparation for a weekend or longer hunting trip, Fortiflora would best be added at least five days prior, during the trip and hunt, and up to three to four days after." Genetics, training and nutrition are the keys to great dog work. No matter how impressive the pedigree and how solid the training program, if the dog is not fed a quality diet on a proper schedule, performance and health will suffer.

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