

# FROM THE NASC

## CHOOSING SUPPLEMENTS FOR YOUR DOG OR CAT – 5 IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK

By Bill Bookout



Animal supplements can play a key role in keeping your animal healthy and happy — particularly when they're incorporated into a program that also includes a high quality diet, routine vet checks and competent care.

There are two types of supplement products:

- Nutritional supplements — vitamins, minerals and other products intended to complement a complete and balanced diet. If your animal's issue is not related to nutrition, he likely won't benefit from a nutritional supplement.
- Health supplements — products intended to support maintenance of normal biological structure and function, also known as “dosage form health products”. A joint support product is an example of a health supplement.

When purchasing a supplement for your dog or cat, inspect product labels for answers to the following questions:

### 1. Are the product claims too good to be true?

There are no magic bullets. If a company claims — or even implies — their supplement will treat, prevent, mitigate or cure any disease, they are breaking the law and misleading consumers. Outrageous product claims should be an immediate red flag.

### 2. Does the product have a lot number?

Lot numbers do not guarantee quality, but they do demonstrate that the manufacturer likely complies with some quality standards requiring product traceability. Lot numbers are essential to helping manufacturers notify customers in the event of a recall.

### 3. Are ingredients and amounts clearly listed?

You should be able to determine the ingredients in a supplement and how much of each is contained in a dose. Ingredients should be listed in descending order by amount, but be aware that large numbers may be misleading. A large number followed by “ppm”, meaning parts per million, indicates a dilute concentration of the ingredient, and in fact may not be a meaningful amount at all.

### 4. Is there contact information if I have questions?

The label should list the company supplying the product, and their contact information. When you call, they should have technicians or a veterinarian on staff who can answer your questions about the supplement, and about testing and quality standards. If you can't get direct answers, consider a different product.

### 5. Does the supplement have the NASC Quality Seal?

The National Animal Supplement Council provides strict guidelines for product quality assurance, adverse event reporting and labeling standards. To display the NASC Quality Seal on their products, a supplier must pass a comprehensive facility audit every two years, maintain ongoing compliance with rigorous NASC quality standards, and pass random independent product testing to ensure they meet label claims.

Price is a final consideration. Cheap products are typically cheap for a reason. Quality ingredients and responsible manufacturing cost money. Determine a price range that fits your budget and buy the best quality supplement you can get for that amount.

#### USE ANIMAL SUPPLEMENTS ONLY

Don't give your animal a supplement formulated for humans. Dogs and cats metabolize differently than we do and should be given supplements from a company that formulates their products specifically for animals. Talk to your veterinarian about supplements that are right for your animal, and select a product formulated for his species.

Bill Bookout is president and founder of the National Animal Supplement Council. He has more than 30 years' experience in the animal health industry and holds a bachelor's degree in physical sciences from the University of Wyoming, and a master's degree from the Pepperdine University Presidents and Key Executives MBA program.