

TOP FIVE USEFUL PRODUCTS FOR CATS

We wanted to showcase some products that are helpful for our feline friends as our annual handout for 2022. As always, we also want to make sure you are spending your money on high-quality items, not ones that will be unsafe or ineffective. There is no government oversight for any of these items, so it's very important to purchase products from reputable manufacturers and sources. We have listed good and bad choices when we can.

Consumerlabs.com has done testing on a variety of supplements, including glucosamine and fish oil products marketed for both animals and people. They found that many, many products did not contain what was stated on the label. Probiotics are another example where the vast majority of pet foods and products claiming to contain probiotics have no living bacteria in them. Zero of nineteen pet foods tested and only two out of thirty probiotic supplements tested met label claims.

Several years ago, the U.S. attorney general directed four major retailers – Walmart, Target, Walgreen's and GNC – to halt the sale of certain herbal supplements after DNA testing failed to detect the plant materials listed on the labels of the majority of products tested, and also found DNA from contaminants not listed on the labels.

Look for the logo of the National Animal Supplement Council or ask us for a recommendation for any of these products before you buy. All the products we sell here at Best Friends have been vetted for quality and safety.

1) Fish oil

Fish oil has numerous benefits. It reduces cancer risk, **especially if started early in life**. As cats age, the fatty acids in fish oil have anti-inflammatory effects, slowing the deterioration of joints, kidneys and heart valves. These effects become more and more important the older a cat gets. 90% of cats have arthritis by age twelve. Cancer and kidney failure are the leading causes of death in cats. Anything you do that influences these diseases can give your cat a longer life. We recommend beginning supplementation as soon as your cat reaches adulthood.

The specific Omega 3 fatty acids that dogs and cats benefit from are EPA and DHA. The recommended amounts are 40 mg/kg of body weight of EPA daily and 25-30 mg/kg of DHA daily. **A 10 lb cat needs about 200 mg of EPA per day.**

Bad product example: A fish oil for cats made and sold by 1-800-Pet Meds was found to contain chemicals called PCBs, which are carcinogens.

Good product example: Nordic Naturals™ fish oil is tested for purity and does not contain mercury, a common contaminant of fish oil products.

2) Glucosamine

Glucosamine slows deterioration of the joints, which means arthritis symptoms will be milder and start later in life. It's best to start giving them early – long before your cat shows obvious pain symptoms. We usually recommend age 9-10 years. Some brands contain other anti-inflammatory substances, such as MSM.

Bad product example: In consumerlabs.com studies, only about half of brands tested contained what the label said they did.



Glucosamine works best as a preventative, not a treatment

Good product example: Products made by NutraMax (Cosequin™ and Dasuquin™) and VetriScience (GlycoFlex™) are especially good choices.

3) Probiotics

Probiotics are supplements containing live bacteria. These products are designed to support the microbiome, which is the community of bacteria, fungi, yeasts and other organisms living in our gastrointestinal tract. Upper respiratory infections, asthma, inflammatory bowel disease, all kinds of intestinal infections, allergies, chronic infections, mental illness, anxiety disorders and even arthritis pain are all problems for which probiotics might be prescribed.

Bad product example: It is not possible for live bacteria to survive in a dry pet food. Many pet foods list bacteria such as Lactobacillus on their ingredient lists but these bacteria are dead and useless in this form.

Good product example: Purina's FortiFlora™, NutraMax's Provable™ and VisBiome Vet™ are the only products we recommend and sell. For anxiety, you can also trust Purina Calming Care™.

4) Feeding toys

For cats, hunting is part of what brain scientists call "The Seeking Circuit." In the seeking circuit, the brain releases dopamine, which heightens arousal and creates a feeling of anticipation. Each small meal, usually consisting of a single mouse, completes the cycle and leaves cats feeling satisfied and complete. Cats need to engage in the seeking circuit six to eight times a day to be mentally and physically healthy.

Toys engage cats in the seeking circuit, putting them in a heightened state of arousal. However, the circuit is not completed without the food reward. Playtime without food leaves them wound up but without the satisfaction of finishing the hunt, which causes chronic stress. Cats should get a small meal after each of many play sessions per day.

Taking away the food bowl and replacing it with feeding toys is an excellent and practical way to satisfy your cat's natural hunting drive.



5) Feliway™ products

Chemicals called pheromones are part of the communication systems of cats and dogs. Feliway products mimic these natural signals, communicating calm and helping cats to relax and get along.

- Wiping Feliway on your cat's carrier makes traveling less stressful.
- We apply Feliway spray to blankets we use while your cat is here in the hospital.
- Diffusers can reduce tension and conflicts between cats at home, or decrease the stress of moving to a new house or apartment.
- Feliway collars allow cats to carry calm feelings with them wherever they go.
- Feliscratch is used to attract cats to scratching posts.
- Feliway products are also used as part of our treatment plans for cats with urinary behavior disorders.

