



# Vitamin D's Role in Your Pet's Health

By Rose DiLeva VMD, MS, CVCP, CVA

Vitamins are water soluble or fat soluble. Fat soluble vitamins, such as Vitamins D, do accumulate in fat tissue and can become toxic in high doses. Dogs and cats, unlike humans, must get their requirements of Vitamin D from their diet. Unfortunately, the amount of Vitamin D found in commercial pet foods varies from manufacturer to manufacturer. Vitamin D regulates calcium and phosphorous absorption, helps regulate calcium homeostasis and is a strong anti-inflammatory. In high doses, fat soluble vitamins cause toxicity. Signs of Vitamin D toxicity in the dog includes vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, increased urination, increased water consumption, weakness, lethargy and tissue mineralization. In cats, kidney failure and increased calcium levels can be present.

## Dr. Rose DiLeva with one of her patients

that have been associated with insufficient levels of Vitamin D include hemangiosarcoma, carcinoma, sarcoma, lymphoma and histiocytic sarcoma.

Pet owners NEED to get an accurate Vitamin D level prior to supplementation. Supplemental Vitamin D is only given to pets with inadequate levels. A blood sample is all that is necessary. If deficient or insufficient levels are found, supplemental Vitamin D is necessary. The levels should be re-checked after 6-7 weeks in case dosage adjustments are required. Supplementation is usually for life. Blood levels should periodically be checked. Any pet with a chronic condition, especially cancer, should be evaluated for Vitamin D levels. Evidence supports the importance of checking Vitamin D levels. It could very well influence your pet's health status now and in the future.

Numerous articles have been published that indicate Vitamin D deficiency is present in many chronic disease states. Low levels have been associated with cardiovascular diseases such as congestive heart failure, cancer, diabetes, hypertension, asthma, infectious diseases, inflammatory bowel disease and kidney disease. Studies show that Vitamin D concentrations are insufficient in dogs with cancer. A study on Labrador Retrievers with Mast Cell tumors of the skin had significantly lower levels of Vitamin D. Cancer types

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