

Healthwise

Benefits From Feeding Raw Diet by Sharon Kauzlarich

I'd like to introduce myself, my family, and most importantly my dogs. My name is Sharon Kauzlarich and I've been asked to chair the Health and Education committee for this breed. I am so excited to have the opportunity to discuss and learn more about health issues related to Boykins. I live in Central Illinois with my husband, Dan, and daughter, Katie. We've enjoyed this breed for over twenty-five years. Currently we own two Boykins, a thirteen-year-old girl, Sassie and a young boy Strauss. In addition we have a house full of Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retrievers. We've had top show Tollers and are currently campaigning the #1 Toller bitch in the nation. We've shown AKC/UKC champions and titled in hunt, rally, and obedience. We are looking forward to show Strauss off in the conformation ring come January. The hunting blend of Boykins and Tollers makes for a pack that can hunt over a varied terrain.

I must admit my interest in dog health-related issues was not been peeked from my Boykins. In fact, my Boykins have always been extremely healthy with our biggest on-going health issues being ear infections. So when I hear about Boykin health issues I must ask myself what is the reason these problems are surfacing in this breed? My guess would be a number of factors such as environment, breeding practices, nutrition, and vaccination.

As I discuss what I have found to be beneficial with my dogs, please remember I am not a veterinarian or an expert. I strongly encourage all pet owners to have a good working relationship with their vet. However, I have also learned I am the ultimate decision maker on what treatments, vaccinations,

and nutrition is afforded to my dogs. If my healthcare provider is unwilling to discuss pros and cons of decisions concerning my dogs, I'm looking for a new vet.

So on to my first subject near and dear to my heart; nutrition. I'll admit right up front, I FEED RAW DIET. I suspect half of the readers are now saying "Is she crazy" and the other half is saying "I can't wait to learn more". My hope is the first half will at least listen to the benefits of this approach of feeding.

My change to raw was prompted by a number of issues not the least being the dog food recalls. However, my main reason for dropping the kibbles was my Toller, Daphanie. She developed immune-mediated hemolytic anemia at the age of three. A dog with this disease, brought on in Daphanie's case by over-vaccination, destroys the red blood cells leading, in many cases, to death of the dog. We saved Daphanie but she lived on prednisone and just would not thrive until I made the decision to scrap the kibbles and turn to raw. Daphanie is now Pred free and enjoying a healthy and active lifestyle.

Nutrition touches every aspect of a dog's life including disposition, coat, muscle texture, teeth, eyes, bone structure, skin, ears, energy level, reproduction, and even their poop. What your dog eats could be the most important consideration you have to make about caring for your Boykin. As known in the computer world, "Garbage In, Garbage Out" most certainly holds true in the canine world as well.

Feeding raw has many rewards for your Boykin but I'll only touch on a few. It can be very frightening to start the process as you may be concerned about doing more harm than good. I was luck to

find a group of dog owners/breeders that have been feeding raw for many generations and I pull from their knowledge. I felt very comfortable in their advice as many in this group are exhibiting or competing with top dogs in the show ring, agility, hunting, and obedience. These dogs are not your "Couch Potato" variety and must be in top performing shape.

Benefits my dogs have enjoyed from raw include the following:

Improved Skin and Coat

Most raw fed dogs will enjoy an itch-free life. If a kibble fed dog suffers from allergies this diet should improve or eliminate the problem. Hot spots go away and their skin is healthy and dander free. After switching to raw you'll see an initial shed-off but the new coat will be thicker, healthier and shinier. Imagine this as you enter the AKC conformation world where something as simple as the feel of the coat can keep you off the winner's podium.

Stronger Bones

Your developing pups will benefit from this diet with stronger bones thus minimizing the risk of structural damage. Their growth rate will be slower and in appropriate proportionate and thus no more of those "ugly growth stages". It would be an interesting study to see if raw fed pups have better hip ratings than their kibble counterparts. I would suspect yes.

Improved Muscle Mass

Protein from a raw diet builds muscle; grain from a kibble diet builds fat. Probably enough said on this subject, our nation of dogs
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