



Winterize

# The Well-Oiled Dog

By Deva Khalsa, VMD



WINTER WEATHER CAN be a refreshing change of pace, but at the same time, low humidity and home heating can dry out your dog's skin and coat. While we humans might opt for topical moisturizing creams and lotions, our fine canine friends do best when they're well oiled. The healthiest fix for your dog's winter dandruff and dry skin problems is to add oil to his diet. You don't have to run out and purchase special oils; two of the best, olive and coconut, are easy to find in supermarkets and health food stores. I recommend them for glowing skin and coat and general health.

Let's begin with olive oil. I particularly like cold-pressed extra-virgin olive oil for cooking. Many commonly used oils break down at high heat, which can affect digestibility. Olive oil does not, making it the preferred oil to

use when cooking for your dog. Rich in antioxidants, especially vitamin E, and phytonutrients, olive oil is best stored in the refrigerator to keep it from being degraded by heat and light. It tends to harden during refrigeration, but will liquefy when allowed to warm up to room temperature. If you simply want to add olive oil to your dog's meal, use a teaspoon a day for a 30 to 40 lb. dog, or up to a tablespoon for a large 90 lb. dog.

To keep a dog's coat soft and rich, coconut oil is my favorite. Plus, it decreases "doggy" odor; even dogs with a musty scent begin to smell sweet. Coconuts are classified as a "functional food," and their oil provides many benefits beyond its super-healthy nutritional content. The secret to this oil's healing power is its medium-chain fatty acids, which have special health-giving properties. The fats in coconut oil are similar to those in mother's

milk, and they have similar healing attributes. Aside from human breast milk, coconut oil is nature's most abundant source of lauric acid, which has been used to kill viruses, bacteria and yeast as well as prevent tooth decay. It also supports thyroid function and enhances metabolism. Dogs love coconut oil on their food as a condiment. One-half to one teaspoon daily for a medium-sized dog (30 to 40 lbs.) is an average portion. Coconut oil should also be refrigerated.

Supporting your dog's biological terrain is the single most important way to maintain his well being and help him have healthy skin and a great coat. Both olive and coconut oil are healthy for your dog's insides, and it will show on his outside. The well-oiled dog will have soft skin and a coat that shines all winter long.

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