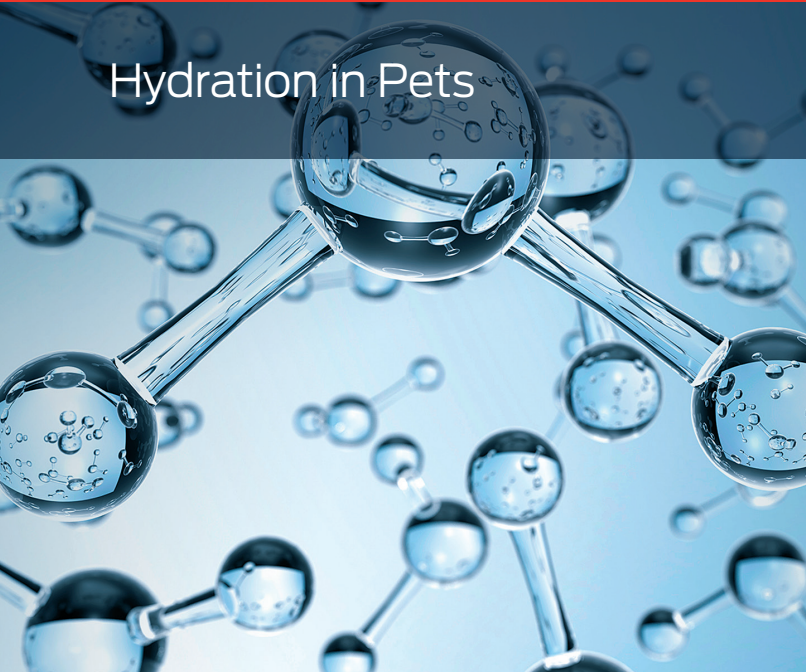


HOT TOPIC

Hydration in Pets



In focus

Water is vital to health. How much water should pets drink, are there differences between cats and dogs, and how can pets be encouraged to drink?

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How much water does a dog or cat need?

Healthy pets will typically self-regulate their water intake to meet their individual needs. Experts recommend providing fresh, clean water, free choice or water at a ratio 1 ml water:1 kcal metabolizable energy of food consumed.¹

As well as the water bowl, pets obtain water from their food. Water is lost via urine, feces, and saliva during respiration (e.g., panting in dogs) or grooming (in cats).¹

A change in water consumption unrelated to seasonal temperature, activity or change in food from wet to dry can indicate an underlying health concern and should be communicated to the veterinarian.

Do dogs and cats differ in their water consumption?

While dogs are typically seen to drink, cat owners may not notice their cat drinking, especially when fed wet diets which can contain as much as 80-85% water and provide most, if not all, of their water needs.¹

The domestic cat's drinking habits trace back to their early days as desert hunters. As carnivores, cats would obtain much or all of their water from eating prey, e.g., birds and mice.²

Cats typically have a lower thirst drive than dogs.³ In addition, some cats have individual preferences for the source (still or moving), the container, or temperature of the water.⁴

How to detect dehydration and which pets are at risk?

Signs of dehydration can include:

- Less elastic skin ('Skin tent test')
- Sticky or dry gums
- Sunken eyes
- Less urination

A number of factors can cause dehydration including overheating, a lack of access to clean drinking water, or an underlying health issue, e.g., diarrhea and vomiting, diabetes, or kidney disease.

Senior cats and dogs may also be less inclined to drink.⁵ Very active dogs may not meet their needs and may need to be encouraged to drink.⁶

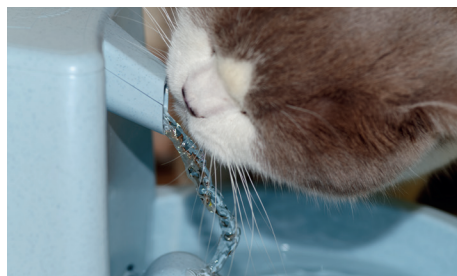
When do pets benefit from increased water consumption?

Increased water intake is typically recommended for pets with lower urinary tract diseases.^{7,8} The primary goal is for the pet to produce a larger volume of a more dilute urine. This results in a decreased concentration of minerals that can form urinary crystals or stones, and may increase frequency of urination.^{7,8}

Increased water intake can also help cats prone to constipation,⁹ as it helps to soften the stool.

How can pets be encouraged to drink more water?

- Feed wet food – although pets drink from their bowl to compensate for the lower moisture in dry diets, a number of studies suggest that wet food (>70% moisture) can help increase total water intake.⁷
- Feeding diets with increased levels of salt may encourage drinking in healthy pets.¹⁰
- Purina research has shown that specially-formulated, nutrient-enriched, flavored water supplements can increase water consumption in cats and dogs.¹¹⁻¹⁵
- Some cats prefer moving water (e.g., via water fountains), larger water bowls (whiskers don't touch the sides) and water provided in a stainless steel or crockery receptacle (plastic odors can deter cats from drinking).⁴
- Offer multiple water bowls in multi-pet households.⁴



Is there a benefit to feeding wet food over dry food?

Most healthy pets can meet their water needs regardless of diet.

The majority of healthy pets will consume sufficient quantities of water to maintain optimal health when eating solely dry foods and drinking water free choice.¹ However, if pets, and cats in particular, are prone to lower urinary tract issues, feeding a wet diet may be beneficial to increase total water intake.^{1,4,7}

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