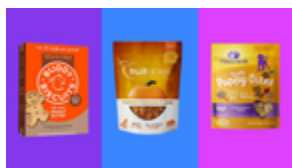


# The 10 Best Dog Treats To Get Tails Wagging

Amy Jamieson

The best dog treats are the yummy rewards you offer your favorite pup after a good walk, perfect manners on a playdate or even to calm dogs that are feeling a bit anxious. But choosing a dog treat that is delicious and has some kind of nutritional value isn't easy — especially when the selection is vast and labels often have confusing ingredients, flavors and benefits.



The best dog treats are healthy and flavorful, too. Here are our favorites for 2023.

Illustration: Forbes / Photo: Retailers

For help deciphering what's best for your dog's unique needs, the first thing you should do is ask a professional. "It is always important to check with your veterinarian for treat recommendations that fit your dog's current health needs. There may be specific ingredients that are not compatible with medical conditions," says [Ellen Lowery, DVM, PhD, MBA](#), of Purdue University Veterinary Hospital and clinical professor Purdue College of Veterinary Medicine and director of the Veterinary Oral Health Council. "In general, high-fat and/or high-calorie treats should be avoided, as these may result in gastrointestinal problems, pancreatitis and obesity."

Take a moment to study the nutritional information on the bag of treats and if you have questions, says Emma Rutherford, a pet food recipe developer for [TheNaturalCanineKitchen.com](#), contact the manufacturer about what's inside. Bottomline: treats with easily recognized ingredients are better than ones that leave you scratching your head.

Our top overall pick for best dog treat are [Buddy Biscuits](#), a low-calorie selection with simple ingredients that will make canine mouths happy. To help you in your search for the most palate-pleasing treat for your pooch, we consulted with experts including Lowery and Rutherford, and for insight to what canines like, we asked for insight from Heather Doll, co-owner of New York City's [Ruff City](#) dog walking. To curate this list, we also carefully studied ratings and reviews to identify the treats that stand out from the pack.

**Best Dog Treat Overall:** [Buddy Biscuits](#)

**Best Dog Treat For Training:** [Zuke's Mini Naturals Soft Dog Treats](#)

**Best Freeze-Dried Dog Treat:** [Pupford Freeze-Dried Dog Training Treats](#)

**Best Bully Stick For Dogs:** [Natural Farm Odor-Free Bully Sticks](#)

**Best Dental Chew For Dogs:** [Greenies Dental Treats](#)

**Best Calming Treat For Dogs:** [Vetriscience Composure Calming Treats](#)

**Best Dog Treat For Puppies:** [Wellness Soft Puppy Bites](#)

**Best Dog Treat For Seniors:** [Zesty Paws Senior Advanced 11-In-1 Bites](#)

**Best Dog Treat For Small Dogs:** [Fruitables Dog Treats](#)

**Best Dog Treat for Large Dogs:** [Rachael Ray Nutrish Soup Bones](#)



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## Cloud Star Buddy Biscuits

\$6

**Dimensions:** 2.37 x 6.5 x 9 inches | **Weight:** 14 ounces | **Flavor:** Peanut Butter or Chicken

The simplicity of this treat is what sets it far apart from others on the market. The makers of this gingerbread-style biscuit pride themselves on using ingredients you can pronounce. There's definitely something to be said about that, especially if you make it a habit of studying ingredients and food labels. Made without corn, wheat or soy, Buddy Biscuits are crunchy, low in calories and made without artificial color or flavors. They're baked with just seven ingredients: chickpea flour, pea flour, tapioca starch, potato flour, peanut butter, canola oil, and mixed tocopherols (a.k.a. natural preservatives). Customers report that dogs love them, even if the biscuits are sometimes broken into pieces inside the box.

### Pros:

Only 7 ingredients

Low calorie

### Cons:

Biscuits may be too hard for some

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### Zuke's Mini Naturals Soft Dog Treats

\$16

**Dimensions:** 3.75 x 7.65 x 10.5 inches | **Weight:** 16 ounces | **Flavor:** Varies

“Finding what your dog determines as ‘high value’ can be helpful when it comes to important training moments, like developing your dog's recall,” says Heather Doll of Ruff City dog walking. “Anything small that can fit in your palm and catch their nose's interest will work!” Zuke's Mini Naturals chicken recipe works well as a little reward when your dog understands a command. The brand recommends that you limit feeding to three treats per every one pound of body weight per day — so if your pooch weighs 25 lbs., that's 75 of these little nibbles at 2 calories per treat. These are made without corn, wheat, soy or artificial colors or flavors and come with a variety of protein choices to accommodate different preferences, including duck, peanut butter and salmon. Fans of these treats like that they are low in calories, small in size and serve as a tasty reward for most dogs.

#### Pros:

Flavor variety

Perfect size for pockets

#### Cons:

Pricier than some others

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## Pupford Freeze-Dried Dog Training Treats

\$16

**Dimensions:** 9.72 x 6.1 x 1.6 inches | **Weight:** 4 ounces | **Flavor:** Varies

If you're in search of something freeze-dried for a pup that prefers that unique texture, Pupford Freeze-Dried treats are a great choice. There are 475 treats inside a four ounce bag, which translates to a lot of rewards for puppies or adult dogs — plus you can break the pea-sized treats in half for smaller pups. It's nice that they're made with just two ingredients (chicken and mixed tocopherols) and have less than 1 kcal per treat, helping to promote a low-calorie diet. Happy customers report in ratings that they are great for training and even appeal to picky eaters. Less favorable ratings noted their higher price and interesting smell.

### Pros:

Break apart easily

Appeal to picky eaters

Just two ingredients

### Cons:

Some customers don't like the smell

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## Natural Farm Odor-Free Bully Sticks

\$28

**Dimensions:** 15.28 x 8.78 x 1.34 inches | **Weight:** 16 ounces | **Flavor:** Beef

These 100 percent beef sticks will engage your pup while also helping with oral health. As they chew, the 6-inch stick helps control tartar and plaque, says the brand, also strengthening jaw muscles along

the way. They're made with ethically sourced 100 percent grass-fed, hormone-free Brazilian beef pizzle, so they are digestible. Dog owners like that they're odor-free and stand up to aggressive chewers but others said they were too hard for some mouths.

**Pros:**

Promotes oral health

No overpowering odor

**Cons:**

Too tough for some dogs to chew

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**Greenies Dental Treats**

\$35\$40Save \$5 (13%)

**Dimensions:** 5.13 x 8.13 x 7.75 inches | **Weight:** 36 ounces | **Flavors:** Various

With a toothbrush-like shape, Greenies Dental Chews work to clean your dog's teeth as they chew. They're meant to be given once a day (with access to water) and digested so make sure you choose the appropriate size based on the weight of your dog (teenie for 5-15 lbs, petite for 15-25 lbs, regular for 25-50 lbs., and large for 50-100 lbs.)

"There can be a lot of variability in the effectiveness of treats marketed for dental care in dogs," says Lowery. "The Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) recognizes products that meet established standards of plaque and tartar reduction. Products are awarded the VOHC Seal of Acceptance following review of data from trials conducted according to scientific protocols." Greenies have this seal on their packaging. For a full list of VOHC accepted products, [click here](#). "Daily dental hygiene through effective mechanisms such as toothbrushing or feeding an appropriate dental food, treat, or other product, helps control plaque and tartar accumulation," Lowery adds.

**Pros:**

Various flavors

VOHC Seal of Acceptance

**Cons:**

Recommended for once a day only

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**Vetriscience Composure Calming Treats**

\$19

**Dimensions:** 12.25 x 5.94 x 9.25 inches | **Weight:** 6.77 ounces | **Flavor:** Chicken, Bacon, Peanut Butter

Before you choose a calming type of treat for your dog — like one formulated with melatonin, ginger, or CBD — talk with your vet about the type of anxiety your pup is experiencing and to understand what kind of treat or chew may help. “Pet owners may need to try different types of calming treats with different ingredients to find a formulation that works,” Lowery says. “Pet owners should look for trusted ingredients that are veterinary formulated and third-party tested. Recommendations include looking for treats that have the National Animal Supplement Council (NASC) seal of approval and are made in a facility that complies with the FDA Current Good Manufacturing Practice regulations, CGMP.”

Composure treats are veterinary formulated, fast-acting, NASC quality certified and made in a safe quality food (SQF) certified and FDA-registered facility. Active ingredients are Thiamine, Colostrum Calming Complex and L-Theanine. Note: larger dogs might require more treats. When you buy them, there’s peace of mind for you, too: Composure has a 100 percent satisfaction, money back guarantee.

**Pros:**

Veterinary formulated and recommended

Satisfaction guaranteed

Fast-acting

**Cons:**

Doesn't work for all dogs

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## Wellness Soft Puppy Bites

\$4

**Dimensions:** 1.9 x 5.25 x 7 inches | **Weight:** 3.2 ounces | **Flavors:** Lamb or Chicken

Got a new puppy? You'll want to choose a treat early on that promotes healthy growth. If you're not sure what to look for, experts can help guide you to the right ingredients. "Added nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, especially from wild Alaskan salmon and fermented cod liver oil or glucosamine for joint health," says pet food developer Emma Rutherford of [TheNaturalCanineKitchen.com](https://www.thenaturalcaninekitchen.com).

Wellness Soft Puppy Bites are packed with Omega fatty acids, salmon oil, a natural source of DHA, and antioxidant rich foods like sweet potatoes and berries. Ratings report that dogs love the way they taste and customers like them for puppies, senior dogs and for dogs in training. Some reviewers don't like how crumbly these 6-calorie treats can be.

### Pros:

Soft for puppies or seniors

Promote good health

### Cons:

Too crumbly for some

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## Zesty Paws Senior Advanced 11-In-1 Bites

\$36

**Dimensions:** 7.9 x 4.3 x 4.3 inches | **Weight:** 11.2 ounces | **Flavor:** Chicken, Beef or Peanut Butter

The golden years can be uncomfortable for pets as their bodies change. It can help to give them supplements that support the aging process. Zesty Paws Senior Advanced soft chews are certified by the [National Animal Supplement Council](#) (NASC) and specifically work to support joint and brain function, liver, gut and skin health, and much more in small, medium or large dogs. It's recommended that you begin with half the suggested amount and gradually increase to the daily amount (between one and three chews a day based on your pup's size).

Reviewers note that dogs like the taste of these chews and many pet owners appreciate the physical benefits that their dogs have experienced with Zesty Paws. Others noted that not every dog responds to supplements the same way. While there is anecdotal evidence that supplements help when it comes to certain conditions, [according to VCA Animal Hospitals](#), it's important to talk with your veterinarian before starting your dog on a new supplement or treat.

### Pros:

Supports dogs as they age

Soft for seniors

On the pricier side

### Cons:

Results vary

Serving is just one to three chews per day





## Fruitables Dog Treats

\$5

**Dimensions:** 0.93 x 2.5 x 9 inches | **Weight:** 7.27 ounces | **Flavor:** Various

Dogs like the crunchy, baked consistency of Fruitables Dog Treats which come in various flavors like pumpkin and banana, crispy bacon and apple and pumpkin and blueberry. It's a nice feature that these 8-calorie flower-shaped treats break apart to accommodate needs of dogs depending on their size, making them perfect for the smaller set. Ratings note that they're great for breeds like terriers or dachshunds and for dogs in training. Free from corn, soy protein, wheat and artificial flavors, the brand says these treats are a blend of fruits, veggies and proteins that are high-quality and produced in the U.S.A. The first few ingredients in a treat you're eyeing should be high-quality and easily recognizable, Rutherford advises, "such as real meat (e.g., chicken, beef), vegetables and fruits."

### Pros:

Break apart for smaller mouths

Made with super fruits like blueberries and apples

### Cons:

More calories than others

Not for dogs who prefer soft treats

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## Rachael Ray Nutrish Soup Bones

\$6

**Dimensions:** 9 x 6.75 x 2 inches | **Weight:** 12.6 ounces | **Flavor:** Beef, Chicken, or Turkey

Mighty mouths like these tasty chews made with real beef, chicken or turkey that take the place of a real bone you might want to toss your dog's way (real bones can be a potential health hazard, [according to the American Kennel Club](#)). Due to their size, these faux bones are not recommended for

toy breeds, dogs smaller than 10 lbs. or dogs under one year of age.

Made with no artificial flavors or meat by-products, Soup Bones have 192 calories per treat, so be mindful if you are counting your pup's calories. The brand says they're long lasting but results may vary based on just how mighty your dog's bite actually is. Some ratings report they disappeared after just a couple of minutes, which you could say is a testament to how good they taste. Some customers froze them to make them last longer. Best practices with chews is to always keep an eye on your pooch when they're gnawing on them. "Never leave your dog alone with a long lasting chew, this could pose a choking hazard if left unsupervised or if your dog likes to gulp food," Rutherford says.

**Pros:**

Mimic real bones

Good for enthusiastic chewers

**Cons:**

High in calories

Not long-lasting for every dog

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## **What To Look For In Dog Treats**

Always consult with your veterinarian about your dog's specific needs before selecting a new treat. Here are a few things you should consider when choosing a treat for your pooch.

### **Nutrition**

In general, says Emily Lowery, DVM, PhD, MBA, high-fat and/or high-calorie treats should be avoided because these may result in health issues like obesity which plagues many household pets. "Unfortunately, treats are not required to have full pet food labeling unless they make a claim, such as 'nutritious,' 'low-fat,' 'highly digestible,' or 'complete and balanced,' and many do not have a calorie content statement or guaranteed analysis on the packaging," she explains. "This information should be readily available from the pet food manufacturer and can often be found on the manufacturer's website or in a product guide." As noted in above, some treats have a lot of calories. In general, treats should not be more than 10 percent of a dog's daily calorie intake, Lowery advises. Choosing a healthy snack for your dog can seem daunting but Rutherford suggests looking for a source of natural, whole-food vitamins and minerals and options with added nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids.

### **Size And Texture**

Always read the label or online information about a dog treat to determine whether it's suitable for

the size of your dog. Some treats aren't for puppies or little dogs. Other treats, like those that address dental needs, are shaped differently for a reason. "There are different types of treats available that help reduce accumulation of plaque and tartar," says Lowery. "Many of these have a mechanical cleansing action which helps 'brush' the teeth, and some incorporate ingredients that work to bind minerals in the saliva to deter the mineralization (hardening) of plaque into tartar." Treats used specifically for training tend to be smaller so they can fit in your hand or be stuffed into a pocket so your hands are free for training. There are dogs who will eat anything you toss their way, while others are more picky. When it comes to preferred texture, determining what your dog will like best could be a matter of trial and error.

## **Flavor**

Look for treats with real, high-quality ingredients that you can understand and avoid artificial flavors or grains which can be inflammatory, Rutherford says. "Ensure that the primary protein source is high-quality and named (e.g., 'chicken' or 'salmon'). Avoid generic terms like 'meat by-products.' Or 'meat meal' this would be a questionable source of protein," she says. "Choose treats preserved with natural options like tocopherols (vitamin E) or herb extracts such as rosemary or oregano, rather than chemical preservatives like BHA, BHT, or ethoxyquin." If you're able, making dog treats at home with yummy natural things like pumpkin or sweet potato can be super affordable, says Doll. "Lots of pups love to snack on things we have around too, like cucumbers and carrots — just double-check that your snack is a safe snack for them," she says.

## **Price**

"We've seen expensive products with cheap fillers, and affordable products with great ingredients," says Doll. "It's important to check the back of the bag." As you've likely noted in your own search, prices will vary depending on where you shop but in our research we've seen that it's totally possible to spend less than ten dollars on a high-quality bag of treats for your pooch. In general, the more your treat claims to do — like help clean teeth or support joint health — the more they're going to cost. Keep in mind that it's our responsibility as pet owners to be smart about how many treats we dole out on any given day. "Excessive treats can contribute to weight gain," says Rutherford. "Always deduct the amount of calories from treats from the main caloric count of the meal per day. Consider your dog's age, size and activity level when portioning treats."

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