



Episode 278: Pet Health and Natural Remedies  
With Full Bucket Health

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Katie: Hello and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie from [wellnessmama.com](https://wellnessmama.com). And I'm here today with Dr. Rob Franklin who is a veterinarian with advanced training in veterinary internal medicine. He has led and developed successful intensive care units in Florida, Australia, and Texas, and has lectured locally and internationally on equine internal medicine. He's published peer-reviewed journal articles and written several textbook chapters on the topic. And on this podcast, we always talk about some aspect of health. And today we are going to go deep on pet health and for the furry members of our family. So Dr. Rob, welcome and thanks for being here.

Dr. Rob: Well, thanks, Katie. My pleasure.

Katie: I think this is such an important topic because many of us have pets that really truly are parts of our family. Yet, I feel like there is not a lot of good info out there about pet health. There's endless websites when it comes to all the aspects of human health, but it's hard to really find good information about how we should be taking care of our pets optimally. So to jump in, I'd love it if you could just kind of give us a primer of some common misconceptions or things we get wrong in modern society when it comes to taking care of our pets.

Dr. Rob: Yeah, and it's a big question. Like you say, there's a paucity of information out there. And the information that people do access, you know, just like everything from Dr. Google, it's hard to know, you know, those voices to trust. And so, I think, you know, thankfully people have a veterinarian if they've got dogs and cat. And obviously, that is a great place as far as starting to find good trusted information is going to a licensed veterinarian for that.

You know, in terms of health and what we see with dogs and cats in the 21st Century, really, the problems that we encounter are not that different than the problems that we experience with their own health. And that is that dogs and cats are now living a modern, domesticated lifestyle that is just so foreign to the way they've evolved or from where they've evolved. So, you know, where diet and exercise tend to be really big for human health, actually diet and exercise are very big for pet health as well. There are a lot of pets that are kept in urban environments and, you know, in apartments and they don't get to get all the exercise they need. You know, they're being fed package diets, which are a long way from where they've started.

And then the other thing that is a big problem with people is just our emotional health and well-being. And I know that you have focused on that before and that's something that we always think about is our own emotional well-being. But actually, a lot of times we see dogs and cats that come in for medical issues. And a lot of times they're behavioral and they really stem from a lack of social well-being. These are emotional critters. You know, dogs tend to be pack animals. Cats do tend to be loners. But they all have, you know, this social interaction that they require and whenever they don't get sufficient levels of that, it affects their health. So, you know, I think that probably the big three things that people deal with, diet and exercise and social well-being, emotional well-being, I think those probably are mirrored in our pets lives as well. So those are big issues for us.

Katie: And yeah, those are perfect, starting places to springboard into a lot of the questions I had for you today. But I love that you brought up the social interaction side because you're right, I've talked about that a lot when it comes to human health and that makes complete sense, that dogs, especially as pack animals, would need that. Does that mean that dogs are better if there's more than one dog in a house or can they get that fulfilled through human interaction, as long as it's done intentionally?

Dr. Rob: They can but they, you know, in every pack, there's an alpha and those of us who have watched say Sir Millan, you know, in "The Dog Whisperer," we know that there's an alpha in there. And a lot of times the alpha is us, right? So yes, companion animals help but, for example, in my family we've got two weenie dogs. And one of them is a little chilly dog. He is the submissive one so he reports to Woody, the older one, and Woody reports to me. So there's definitely...when Woody doesn't get my interaction as the alpha you know, he's wanting that. He's wanting the leader. Where's the pack leader? So I think it can help for Chilly. You know, he gets it all from Woody. But, you know, they've got to have that hierarchy and when you're the alpha, they're wanting you to be there. Now, sometimes mistakenly, people allow the dog to be the alpha and that creates a lot of problems, you know, with aggression and behavioral issues that can be very difficult to get over until that hierarchy is re-established.

Katie: That makes sense. Another thing I've heard that I would love verification from you if it's true is that there's actually benefits... I know we're gonna talk about pet health and gut health, especially. But I've heard that there's actually gut health benefits for humans of having pets in the house, especially dogs, largely because they're inside and outside and bring interaction with other species of bacteria. In fact, I've seen studies that when there's households with dogs, there's actually a lower incidence of allergies in children in those homes. Have you seen any of that research or is that something that you would believe to be true as well?

Dr. Rob: Yes, and that topic, the breadth of the health benefits that we get from companion animals, is amazing. So you mentioned a couple and we get a diverse microflora, which are the healthy microbes that live on our body and in our body. We do get a diverse microflora when we live in conjunction with other animals and so you're right there. And then, you know, certainly, with the allergy thing, you know, the more that our kids are sort of exposed, you know, and it's been in a sterile environment where you really get trouble.

You can get trouble with your microflora. You can get trouble with your allergies when you're just operating in a bubble. So, you know, the body is designed to learn how to interact with various allergens and to realize that, some of these are...need to create a significant response and some of these need...their response needs to be insignificant. But whenever you expose, you know, kids to a lot of different things, then that allows their bodies to react appropriately.

Now, the other thing that is just... Well, there's several more items that are extremely beneficial with having pets in the household. And those can vary from dealing with anxiety and depression. There are some great, great studies that show that people that own pets are a lot more resilient. You know, the pet becomes a coping mechanism for people. And, you know, that they're always happy and willing to be our friends no matter how bad our day was and how perhaps neglectful we were to them. Even that morning, that afternoon they're wanting to be your buddy again.

And that has tremendous emotional benefit. But there's also real physiologic health benefits that are conveyed by being a pet owner. And we see a lot of people that are recovering from chronic disease, dealing with chronic disease. They may have hypertension. There's risk factors with developing heart disease they go down whenever you've got a pet. So pet ownership has lots of emotional and physiological benefits for people.

Katie: That's awesome. Yeah, and, of course, we all just love our pets and enjoy them too, which is social interaction and connection for us, which is also beneficial. You mentioned diet also being a really big factor for pets. And it makes sense that that correlation is there because we've all read and heard how our modern diets are not necessarily how humans were meant to eat. And I have to believe probably dogs weren't meant to live in, you know, a little square box of a house and eat a mono diet, the same thing over and over for their whole lives. But go deeper on that. Like, from all of your research and the work that you've done, what does an optimal food scenario look like for dogs?

Dr. Rob: Well, and we'll say optimal, and we'll have to also sort of use the word practical because optimal isn't realistic. So, let's just talk about the diverse part of a dog's diet, you know, several hundred years ago, 1,000 years ago, as far back as you care to go. You know, dogs, even before they became domesticated, they were foragers, right? And so they're gonna take advantage of eating dead animals. They're gonna take advantage of capturing small prey, hunting in a pack, and capturing larger prey. So all that diversity, you know, and as they feed as a pack, sometimes they're going to get, you know, be stuck on a leg and getting, you know, bone and ligament and muscle. And sometimes they're going to have some of the abdominal organs and stuff like that. So they're eating different things all the time.

And even just eating a whole prey so say they caught a squirrel or something. You know, they're getting a very diverse diet by eating that whole animal because they don't scrimp on any of it. They eat the whole thing. And so, you know, with eating the brain tissue has got really high omega fatty acid content. We all know that and I mean, it's kind of gross to think about it. But, I mean, if you think they are getting a really good dose of that. When they eat the intestines of a prey, they're getting a huge amount of a probiotic. They're naturally getting that probiotic source. They're getting the enzymes from the pancreas. They're getting the bile salts from the liver. You know, so they get all these minerals and these elements that we try to recreate. And that's where I think that we get into a bit of trouble is that we're trying to take diversity and we're trying to put it into a kibble or a can. And it's just really hard to do.

Now, we have developed some better diets, and I think people try to do, you know, the best they can. I mean, some people get really radical and go on these raw diets for themselves and also for their dogs, which is great, but that's not a silver bullet either. That gets hard to provide that diversity, you know. If you just go and buy raw bone and meat that's not just what the dog eats. I mean, if you think about it, they need, you know, all those organs and, you know, the microbes and the enzymes and everything that they're not gonna get out of just eating bone and meat. So, you know, you can go from the extreme of a low-quality kibble to the, you know, extreme of people trying to feed a raw diet. Neither one does a great job.

So the answer probably lies in the middle as far as what's optimal and what's practical is, you know, in the 21st Century, we have to have a packaged diet. You know, people just, they've got to feed their dog one or two times a day. And, you know, we're all busy leading our lives and trying to, you know, cook or prepare or go out and hunt something for your dog, that hardly happens. And granted, there are people that spend extreme amounts of time doing that and that's great. A tip of the hat to them. But let's face it, most of us don't have the time. We need to reach for something else.

And I think that the starting point for people to realize is that these low-quality foods, these highly processed foods, that we fed in the past and continue to feed because they tend to be affordable, and they put a lot of the sort of sexy words on the packaging that make us think that we're doing the best we can, that these are actually a big problem for our dogs. And they lead to a lot of the health issues that we deal with when we're treating these small animal patients.

Katie: Got it. You don't have to name brands if you want, but are there any particular types of food that you would say are better than the rest or things that people can look for on labels? And I know we'll talk about

supplementation and how to get more optimal in a minute, but what should we look for as pet owners when we're trying to pick a food?

Dr. Rob: Great question. So, you know, what we're looking for in commercial diets we need to be thinking about the same things whenever we are going in and buying food for ourselves. We need to be looking at whole foods. We need to be looking for a limited number of ingredients. I think those are really great places to start.

When we deal with a lot of the processed foods and a lot of the meals and where you've just taken something and you've basically processed it and got the best out of it and then you have what's left over, that's where a lot of our pet food has been generated from. So we want to avoid those types of things. I like, you know, a salmon and pea protein is...there are several diets that utilize that. You get a lot of fatty acids from the salmon. The pea proteins tend to be good plant-based proteins that dogs do well on as well.

A lot of our diets are very inflammatory because they have a lot of the Omega-9s in them. And so the omega three, six and nine requires a natural balance to be anti-inflammatory versus being pro-inflammatory. And so if we get that Omega level off of its normal ratio of having more anti-inflammatory than pro-inflammatory, then we basically are walking around with a highly inflamed animal and people are the same way. And you get a lot of that from your cereal grains. You get a lot of the Omega-6s and 9s that tend to be more pro-inflammatory. And we need those healthy Omega-3 doses that can come from things like flax and salmon to keep our inflammation under control.

So those are key tenants that I ask my clients to look at whenever they're buying their food. And realize that, you know, dog food companies are out there to sell dog food, right? So they're gonna do as much as they can to put things on the label that are going to be enticing. You know, they're gonna try to translate things over from how we shop as consumers for own diets into the dog thing and, you know, they're gonna have what we call label dressing on there.

And so I think the consumer needs to be a little bit careful with that because the amount of things they can put on the label compared to what actually has to be in the product, that's a wide margin. And quite honestly, people get misled with a lot of the label claims that are on there. And so, you know, you can just put a trace amount of something that would be ineffective at that dose into a diet and you say, "Boom, this also contains, you know, glucosamine." And everyone says, "Well, glucosamine's great for joints, so that must be a great product."

Well, I caution people to think that in a diet, in a well-balanced diet, they're going to get things like extra joint supplement or bone supplement or, you know, muscle or gut. They're just not going to get those supplements in their diet. So if your dog actually needs a supplement, it probably needs a supplement that is specifically designed for that and not something that's thrown in there at a very minuscule amount and put on the label and where you feel like "Oh, yeah, I'm paying a little bit extra for this, but I'm getting the supplement built into it." It just doesn't work that way.

Katie: Got it. Okay, so let's talk about some of the scenarios where pets might need supplements. And I know that you were involved with and work with a company that has the probiotic that I give to my dog. Let's start with probiotics. Is this something that dogs and cats kind of universally need if they're living in a modern environment because you mentioned in the wild, they would be eating food sources that naturally have that. And they probably aren't hunting down or eating dead animals quite so much if they're living in our houses. So is that a universal need among house pets?

Dr. Rob: It is, very simply. It is for people and for pets on a modern diet. We just don't get that diversity and that microflora that we need whenever we're eating modern prepared meals. Whether, you know, you're feeding the can or can food or kibble food, it's those dogs have to have those healthy microbes., number one just to keep their gut in check, but number two to help them digest the food that they have and to resist infection. And then, you know, the third thing is that these probiotics and prebiotics as well provide a tremendous support to the immune system.

Most people don't realize that your gut is the key to your overall body health. It really starts with having a healthy gut. And so our immune system is... You know, when everyone thinks about their immune system, they think about lymph nodes. They think about lymphocytes and your other white blood cells that clean up infection and make antibodies and do all that. And you think all that sort of happens inside your body, you know, whether it be your spleen, your lymph node, your bone marrow.

But they don't realize that 70% of your actual immune system is in your gut. And the reason that, you know, we were designed that way is so that we can...basically anything that we're eating or drinking, your body needs to mount an immune response. If it's something that's bad for us, it needs to immediately pick up on that and try to do whatever it can to stop that bad thing from hurting us. And if it's something good, then it needs to react to that in a positive way that allows that microbe to go ahead and live inside of us or on our skin in a synergistic effect.

So, you know, having that immune health, having that need for improved digestion, and just realizing that everything, most of our body's health starts in the gut, you know, it's just there's no doubt to me that probiotics should be part of a modern diet. You know, I take them every day. I feed them, you know, to my pets every day. It's amazing how fewer common colds. You know, everyone thinks, "Well, you're just trying to prevent GI upset." Well, yeah, that too. But if you wanna have really, you know, great GI health and, you know, probiotics work wonderful. But they also help your immune system in dealing with viral infections and with dealing with allergens. So there's so much that is conveyed through the use of probiotics that it's such an easy thing to recommend for pets.

Katie: Got it. Are there any other supplements that are kind of universal or is that the main one and then beyond that, it would be you need to work with the vet to see if your pet needs a specific thing?

Dr. Rob: Well, I think, you know, there are some other common areas that we see problems in our small animal companion animals. And I think probiotics are one. I think the other thing that most of the time they need help with are enzymes. Enzymes are, you know, a big deal on the human side as well. People realize that,

you know, an enzyme is the thing that helps us break down food, whether that be protein, be fat, be carbohydrate. Any of those things require an enzyme to break it down so that our body can absorb it. And, you know, thankfully we've got a pancreas and we've got a liver that helps us do that.

But, you know, we are loading up our diets and sometimes we're not able to extract all the nutrients out of it because, again, you know, we're feeding these processed foods and they need basically a little extra help to help unlock all those nutrients. So I think that our pancreas and our liver, we see a lot of inflammation in the pancreas, a lot of inflammation in the liver in dogs, in cats. And, you know, I think that is just because they're under chronic stress to try to digest these pet foods that we're giving them. So I think that enzymes is definitely a good thing to provide a pet daily just to help them get the most out of their food.

And then another very common thing that we see in the veterinary clinic is dogs coming in, and to some extent cats, but more often dogs coming in with arthritis. As we just talked about just sort of trying to get control of inflammation in a dog so trying to get those Omega fatty acids in the right sort of ratio, you know, anytime you're walking around with inflammation, you know, a big place that shows up in your joints. And we see these dogs are thankfully living longer. And that's great. And that's due to modern medicine and just our ability to detect disease earlier and prevent disease and infection. You know, that part's wonderful, but these dogs are, you know, in their latter years of their life. Their quality of life typically deteriorates because their joints hurt.

So, you know, having a joint supplement can be a really important thing for especially our senior dogs but also our active dogs. And those of us that, you know, like to go out and run and maintain a healthy lifestyle, you know, during our younger years, you know, we realize that a lot of...so that we don't get arthritis is playing prevention and trying to keep a low inflammatory diet and trying to take in those healthy building blocks for the joints through a joint supplement. You know, doing that before arthritis as we go, you know, later on.

So another big issue that we see with our dogs especially, sometimes cats, is the development of arthritis. So quality of life in these pets, they're getting older, you know, and a lot of our dogs are living longer because of advancements in modern medicine. We're detecting disease earlier. We're preventing disease from occurring. But a lot of times their quality of life goes down because their joints get stiff and they develop arthritis. And so, you know, I think that there's certainly room to go in and supplement both the dog that is actively, you know, dealing with arthritis and also with active dogs, and especially large breed dogs, that are prone to arthritis developing arthritis later on in their life.

So, just like, you know, those of us that run and exercise you know, we try to keep a very non-inflammatory diet. We also take, you know, things like glucosamine and the joint supplements and such early on in our life to prevent arthritis. We can do the same thing with our active dogs. And, you know, obviously, we can supplement them once that's occurred, but the more you can, you know, stop inflammation and provide those building blocks for the joints and joint fluid, the better off you're gonna be and the better your dog's gonna be. We all hate to see those stiff older dogs. And quite honestly, that's just one of the most common things that come into the vet clinic is these dogs that, you know, have bad arthritis.

Another good way to manage that is also to keep them at a healthy weight. So a lot of our dogs get obese, especially our big breed dogs, our big labs and golden retrievers and stuff. They get overfed, under-exercised, and they get extremely obese. And obesity is creating a lot of inflammation in their bodies. And then it's just, you know, from a physical standpoint it's harder on their joints as well. So I think the gut and the joints are the biggest things that I think that people need to be thinking about supplementing.

Katie: Okay. Great. And another question, especially I guess it applies more to dogs unless there's a corollary with cats as well. I've heard kind of mixed advice on what kind of things we should let dogs gnaw and chew on both for safety, like, I've heard some people raw bones are safer because they're not gonna chip or some people say you shouldn't give certain bones to dogs. What are some good guidelines around that? And are there specific things that are actually beneficial that provide some source of nutrients that we could be letting them chew on?

Dr. Rob: Yeah, good question. Good question. You know, honestly, we don't see that many problems in the vet clinic in terms of, you know, dealing with intestinal perforations or anything from dogs eating bones. You know, they're naturally designed to eat bones. I think raw bones tend to be good, you know, for a lot of reasons that you mentioned. They're going to... You know, that's going to keep their teeth clean. It's going to, you know, keep them active and interested in something. It's also going to provide them with some macronutrients, some mineral content, that they may not be getting elsewhere. But I think some of the better synthetic things that are just there for them to pass the time, those are fine too. Again, it some of its social well-being and just keeping them interested maybe while we're out at work or doing other things and they've got something to play with or deal with. That's important.

There's also been some advancements with some of these chews that help with dental health. And dental health is, again, another one of these just day in and day out when we look at these pets and they just have...especially the smaller breed dogs that are on, you know, little tiny kibbles or canned food, their mouths just are really, really bad. They get terrible gingivitis. Their teeth start to rot out. It's a nightmare. People normally notice it because their breath stinks. And as veterinarians, we look in there and we just see advanced dental disease one case after another.

So I think that using chews can be helpful in that. Where I was sort of going with that, there are some that are specifically designed to help with oral health and I think that those should be considered. There's even some, you know, that truly have like a medicinal value to them as well. There's a product called OraVet that's out there that's made by the people that make Frontline and things like that. But it's extremely beneficial in keeping those teeth and gums healthy and so I think people should consider that.

They also need to consider the fact that dogs need an annual dental just the same way that we need to go see the dentist every year. It is important for their oral health to get those teeth cleaned up, you know, assess the gums and make sure they're fine, detect fractures and abscesses and things like that that we can do when we do a dental on these dogs. But dental health is a huge deal. And I think that chews can help support that interval between their annual cleaning and keep their breath nice and fresh, which makes them a popular pet at home, but it also makes them a healthy pet.

Katie: Should we be brushing their teeth because I've seen a lot of products out there for brushing both dogs' and cats' teeth. Is that...I guess my thought's always been that's not something that would have naturally happened in their normal environment, but I also know they're not living in their normal environment. So is that something we need to worry about?

Dr. Rob: Well, I think it is. You know, that is certainly one of the avenues that we recommend for people to care for that. You know, there are some things you can put in the water that help sort of, you know, regulate the oral health. That works to a certain degree. It would be more akin to us rinsing our mouth out with mouthwash. But, you either need to be brushing them or they need to be fed one of these oral chews that are designed for dental health. They're both gonna do essentially the same thing but if you're not doing one of those two things, then you're definitely neglecting the teeth and gums of your dog.

And cats can get, you know, issues as well. And quite honestly, it can be easier just to brush a cat's teeth than to try to give it a specific chew for its dental health. But the way these animals evolved, you know, part of eating those less interesting parts of the animal, you know, the tougher parts, is that they essentially got their teeth cleaned in that process. You know, that gristle, the bone, everything like that just really works to scrub those teeth. And so they're not getting that in this modern environment so we do have to do something.

Katie: That makes sense and I've heard that on the human correlation as well is how we used to have to eat obviously a much more varied nutrient diet by eating the whole animals or eating whatever was available at the time. But also we didn't have the ability to soft cook everything throughout human history. So we had to actually gnaw and chew, which develops the jaw and the maxilla. And all of these things, which I've heard now functional dentist say, that's one of the reasons we're seeing so many problems in kids is A, not enough fat-soluble vitamins and B, we're not using our jaws to our fullest extent so they're not developing correctly. And so it makes sense. Like, there was probably a very important reason that animals had to really gnaw and chew on things. And just like in our human diets, everything's essentially baby food, it's so soft. We've kind of done the same thing with our pets.

Dr. Rob: Exactly. And, you know, I was just gonna parlay that into one final thing is don't feed them off the table. You know, those, all that soft, mushy, salty, flavorful food that goes on our plates is not good for these dogs. If there's anything that you wanna do that's just easy to help your dog, number one is don't feed it table scraps. It causes intestinal problems, it causes dental problems, and it causes obesity. And so that's an easy thing to avoid. And we always recommend people just avoid doing that.

Katie: That brings up a great question. Are there any foods that are okay to give to our pets? For instance, like if I'm making, you know, grass-fed meat for dinner and I trim it, can I give raw meat to a pet? Are there things that are okay or if so, what are those guidelines?

Dr. Rob: Yes, and sometimes, you know, we'll prescribe a home-cooked diet for certain... Sometimes we're doing a food trial and we're trying to look for things that may be setting the dog's allergy systems off or we may be trying to restrict to really, really basic food because your pet had a digestive upset. But I would say that, you know, while we talk about the natural diversity that these animals grew up on or evolved through,

we do not have the ability to recreate that diversity. And so when we think, "Well, you know, I'm cooking a nice, grass-fed piece of meat here. It's all organic. You know, everything looks good, I'll just share that with my dog," that's not a part of that dog's normal diet, modern diet. So I would rather that dogs stay on a high-quality kibble and not get, you know, little pieces of healthy things because it's just not truly diverse and their systems, they're not set up in a way where they've been scavenging and, you know, they've got a gut that's ready for those different sorts of curve balls, I'll call them.

You know, it's kind of when you go to the third world and you go travel or something like that, you know, those people that have been eating...in that environment and eating that real diverse thing, they don't have any problem, you know, processing even, you know, things that make us very sick. A dog in North America, you know, is invariably living on a very focused diet. And so I like to keep that, you know, consistent. It sounds counterintuitive when we talk about diversity is great in the way that they grew up, and if we could just recreate that, but the problem is we can't recreate that. So, by realizing our limitations, we say, "Well, let's not try to throw them these curve balls because it will...their bodies just aren't ready for it."

Now, sometimes your veterinarian's going to, again, say, "Hey, I want your dog to eat, you know, boiled chicken and rice." And that's a common thing that we'll do after they've, you know, had a digestive disturbance. We're trying to keep it you know, simple ingredients, things that are easy to digest. You know, there's a variety of different home recipes that we'll provide but I would only seek those under veterinary guidance and just, you know, try to be consistent in the fact that, "I'm gonna keep my dog being fed a really high-quality kibble diet. And, you know, I'm gonna use the probiotic supplements. And you know, that's what my dog gets." If you do that you're just not going to see a lot of problems with your dog. If you throw them curveballs left, right and center, there's more likely to tip things out of favor and they're gonna start to develop some issues or have the chance to.

Katie: Okay, cool.

This episode is brought to you by Four Sigmatic, creator of all things superfood mushrooms and founded by my favorite Finnish Fun guys. I love all of their products, and in fact, I'm sipping their Reishi hot cocoa as I record this. These superfood mushrooms are always a part of my daily routine with their coffee + lions mane or coffee + cordyceps in the morning for energy and focus without as much caffeine as coffee to their chaga and cordyceps in the afternoon for antioxidants and immunity and the Reishi elixir at night for improved sleep. They also just released skin care that so clean you not only can eat it.... But its encouraged. Their charcoal mask has activated charcoal to clarify, chaga and cacao for an antioxidant boost and other herbal and superfood ingredients. It's so clean that it can literally be made into a cup of hot cocoa as well! Their superfood serum contains a blend of avocado and olive oils with Reishi and herbs for a hydrating skin boost. As a listener of this podcast, you can save 15% with the code wellnessmama at [foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama](https://foursigmatic.com/wellnessmama).

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Katie: Another thing you mentioned, in the beginning, was the movement aspect. And you're right. I think a lot of pets spend a lot of time indoors during the day or even in kennels or cages as their owners are at work. But I've also seen studies on the flip side of that of how pet owners, in general, tend to be more healthy because they do need to take their dogs for a walk or they are there's things that cause them to be more active. But what does good interaction or good action levels for pets look like? I know it's obviously harder to take a cat for a walk. But specifically with dogs, how much activity do they need? And how can we make sure they're getting enough of it?

Dr. Rob: Great question. I think that that really goes a bit into breed. And so what is that dog designed to do? So, you know, a lot of our hunting and sporting dogs, I mean, you know them. They're just so full of energy. So, you know, an appropriate level of exercise for them is a lot different than. you know, your little Yorkie or what we'll call lap dogs and where they don't require as much exercise. So, you know, if you're a jogger and you take a little Bichon Frise out for a five-mile jog, you're probably gonna be doing more harm than good on that small dog. Now, you know, you have a border collie or a labrador, you know, it's completely appropriate.

So they have to look at, again, take that veterinary advice and we apply that and help people regulate, you know, how much exercise is appropriate. But I think every dog in an urban environment can benefit from as little as a walk around the block. I mean, if you've got a traditional 20 to 30-pound indoor dog and you live in an urban environment, then getting that dog out for some exercise is just crucial. I don't think you can overdo it if you're doing leash walking or something like that. If you are a big runner and you don't have a dog that is, you know, a sporting dog or a herding dog or some sort of working dog, I think you probably need to check with your vet and make sure it's appropriate, whatever distance that you're trying to run with the dog because, you know, they can get very sore, especially if they're not conditioned for it, but they may just not be bred for it either.

Katie: Okay, good. That's a good benchmark. Another question when it comes to pets. I've seen a rise of articles and just different things online of different natural remedies that can be used on pets, whether... I think CBD is a huge one right now. Everybody's talking about giving that to their pets. I've seen people talk about giving like different herbs or other types of supplements to their pets. And I'm really curious to get your take on this. Are there things that are in general like safe to give our pets if they're having some kind of an issue or is that always a situation where we need to take them to a vet?

Dr. Rob: Again, I think that there are, you know, things that are easy to assess, and you can give certain things to dogs. And then sometimes, you know, with veterinarians it's typically when we're dealing with a problem, then we're going to, you know, advise certain changes. But let's face it, you know, you get to go to the doctor a lot less whenever you're making sensible, healthy changes in your own life and I think the same thing applies to dogs.

Just on the CBD thing we have probably about six months ago came out with a CBD chew, and, you know, CBD, it's...and there's so much it's out there and people just don't know where to start. It's hard to tell what's what, where the quality is. What's the appropriate dose? What's the appropriate form? You know, I mean, I think everyone's just sort of jumping on that bandwagon. And where we see a lot of benefit in our product, which is the Rocket Animal Health, the Canine Kush too, is that we see that helping with these arthritic dogs. Again, we combine it with a few of those other active things that help provide, you know, sources of glucosamine, sources of chondroitin sulfate, sources of hyaluronic acid.

And then there's other anti-inflammatories. You know, we're all pretty savvy to things like Boswellia and curcumin. And there are certain forms of those that are more bioavailable, better absorbed. So we combine our product with that and then add in the water-soluble organic CBD. And that is big on these arthritic dogs, the ones that need nutrient-natural ways to reduce inflammation, which, you know, the Boswellia and the curcumin are really great at doing. And then they need, you know, the building blocks to repair their joints. And then they need the pain-relieving aspects so they don't have to take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs every day. They can rely on the natural pain-relieving effects of CBD.

And so we see, you know, tremendous results from that product as well as, you know, from the anxiety, people, you know, talk about CBD use and, you know, relieving anxiety for people, and that's great. But what we have to realize, again, in those urban environments, is a lot of our dogs are anxious. I mean, a lot of the problems that we see is these dogs acting out and doing things that are sort of frustrating to the owners. They're doing that because they're dealing with tremendous separation anxiety. And so being able to provide that CBD in there to mitigate those symptoms, as well as trying to be more proactive about getting more social exposure to the animal, are a great way.

So yes, there are things that can give a health benefit, as far as other supplements or natural things, that are going to help us and help our pets. I'd say if there's not a trusted source that you have, in terms of getting some of that stuff, I think it's worth asking your vet, "Hey, what do you think about, you know, X, Y, Z? Is this liable to help my pet?" And I think, you know, them knowing the breed, the age, the medical issues that may or may not be there and what your intent is with the product, I think that they're going to be able to guide those specific questions that may come up from time to time.

Katie: Yeah, that's super helpful. And I will make sure that I know that you guys have resources and all the products that you've mentioned. I'll make sure those are linked in the show notes at [wellnessmama.fm](http://wellnessmama.fm) so people can find them. Any other parting advice you wanna give to pet owners or specific product recommendations you would make, so I can include them in the show notes?

Dr. Rob: You know, again, I think people need to just think about the big three, you know, diet, exercise, and social well-being and apply those healthy lifestyle choices that you guys are always talking about on your show that people are making for their families and for themselves and applying that to your pet. They rely on us for all those things. And I think that if you're mindful of those you can do, you know, a lot of good in prolonging their health, their life, and elevating their health and minimizing those problems like arthritis that affect quality of life. And so, you know, simple diet, you know, using whole foods, using limited ingredients, trying to be mindful about things like Omega ratios. And I think, you know, providing social-well being and providing some level of exercise that's appropriate for the age and the breed and lifestyle of your pet are just really key tenements to health.

Don't forget your annual visit to your veterinarian and making sure that, you know, you're caring for those teeth, as well. That's the first part of the digestive tract. And it's, you know, diarrhea and stinky breath are two parts of the digestive tract that cause common complaints from owners. So a good way to deal with that is being proactive, getting those teeth cleaned at the vet, you know, annually. And then doing those things too, you know, with the healthy chews and things to try to keep those or brushing the teeth to keep those teeth as free of diseases as possible in between those cleanings. Those are really easy things for people to latch onto and just have tremendous health benefits.

Katie: Awesome. And then lastly, as we wrap up, I would love for you to just speak for a moment about FullBucket and the work that you guys do in giving and helping pets in need around kind of around the world because I know you guys have a huge social impact here and this is something that's really important to you guys and to your mission.

Dr. Rob: Oh, absolutely. And it's always a fun part of our business that we get to do and we get to talk about as well. But, you know, I think I had talked about books that we read that really were life-changing. You know, for me it was... I don't know how your mom is but my mom's always forwarding me random e-mails and sometimes sending books and things and a lot of that stuff. And quite honestly, she may or may not listen to this, but doesn't get read. And one time, you know, she did send me a book that Blake Mycoskie wrote, "Start Something That Matters." And, of course, he's the Tom Shoe founder. And that was, oh, a dozen years ago. And that was really at the time that my partner and I were starting to come up with some of these nutritional supplements.

And it just, you know, and 12 years ago, you know, having a social enterprise really wasn't...people didn't do it. I mean, it's sort of table stakes now. Every company that you see, it has some sort of social cause they're trying to embrace just because that's what the consumer, quite honestly, demands. But it was really refreshing, you know, 12 years ago to read the book and decide, "Hey, if we're gonna do something, if we're gonna make a business, and what the world doesn't need is another supplement business. You know, what the world needs is really quality products that do leverage that for-profit business into helping, you know, those that are less fortunate in a sustainable way where we're not just trying to constantly shake the bushes and get donations and stuff." Hey, everyone has a purchasing power of \$1 and how you wanna apply that dollar. I think we all have a social conscience, and we'd all like for a portion of that dollar to go and help those that don't have the blessings that we all have so readily available to us.

So what we did with that was we sort of parlayed this nutrition company into a one-for-one type of deal where for every product we sell, we provide one to a working animal in need. And so working animals are, you know, in a traditional standpoint, people think about, you know, there's about 100 million working horses out in the world. Those are horses, donkeys, and mules that are working in developing countries. These people don't have, you know, a truck. They're working in mountainous landscapes trying to haul coffee off of a hill or, you know, firewood to their homes because they don't have anything but a wood burning stove. They've got to, you know, bring pasture, go cut down roadside pasture and bring that to their milk cow. You know, it's just those animals are truly a big part of the majority of the world and that's the impoverished world and who are the majority in our world.

And so we do support those, both with a nutritional supplement that's specifically designed and made in country and we also provide our veterinary resources as well as we lead several trips down to Central America to provide veterinary care, dental care, vaccinations, deworming. We look at lameness issues, look at saddle sores, and try to do a lot of education. What's really cool is we get to work with local veterinarians who we've just made great friendships. They're just, you know, both a wealth of knowledge to us, and we are wealth and knowledge to them. And so we love working with them. That's a very sustainable way for us to contribute into a local community where we can help train the local veterinarians who's going to be there when we're not.

So that's a great way but, you know, there's working small animals too that we support and a lot of these are, you know, things like dogs that provide social... They go into hospitals. They go into...they work with, you know, warriors that are dealing with PTSD. They're dealing with people that are, you know, troubled with depression or have mental or cognitive disabilities.

And these dogs are specially trained to go in and provide this emotional support. And these are truly working animals. I mean, these animals are making people's lives better. And we're very proud to support those type of working animals. And so, as we supplement and give back, we're always sort of looking towards that working animal, whether that be a small animal or a large animal. But those are the ones that we support. And there's lots of opportunities to help animals out in the world. That's just that particular niche that we've contributed to and will continue to do so. And it's...we couldn't be prouder to do it.

Katie: I love that. And that was another reason I was so excited to have you on and to share that today. Like I said, I use your products with my pets. And I know that you guys do so much good to help pets around the world and working animals. And I'm really appreciative that you took your time to be here with us today and share your expertise. And I think this will be really helpful for a lot of pet owners. So thank you.

Dr. Rob: You bet. My pleasure.

Katie: And as always, thanks to you for listening and for sharing your most valuable asset of your time with both of us today. We're so grateful that you did. And I hope that you will join me again on the next episode of the "Wellness Mama" podcast.

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