



620 West Lancaster Ave • Wayne, PA 19087
Phone: 610-688-0769 • Toll-Free: 800-281-4820
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Interview with Dr. Townsend from WellPet



Braxton's recently had a chance to speak with Dr. Al Townsend of **WellPet**. They have contributed their products to our gift baskets for the **Annual Harvest Fest**.

Dr. Al graduated from the University Of Georgia School Of Veterinary Medicine in 1969. He spent the next three years working in two large metropolitan small animal practices honing his skills. In 1972 he established the Eastern Shore Animal Hospital in his hometown of Chestertown, Maryland. He has always had an interest in Canine Sports Medicine and Nutrition. His awareness of the value of nutrition has lead him to also take a position as a consultant for Eagle Pet Products, Inc in 1993. In 2006 Dr. Al sold his practice and took a full time position as Staff Veterinarian at Eagle Pack. Eagle Pack is now under the umbrella of WellPet where he continues as Staff Veterinarian.

“Every veterinarian should recognize the value of recommending good nutrition. Superior nutrition is the key to a pet living a long, happy and healthy life.”

Dr. Townsend is a contributing author to the text “Canine Sports Medicine” and has received the coveted “Golden Stethoscope Award” from the Iditarod for contributions above and beyond the call of duty in bringing veterinary care to the dogs of the Iditarod.

Braxton's:

Tell us a little bit about the shortcomings of the many commercial pet products or treats on the market today.

Dr. Townsend:

That's a great question. We are going through an epidemic in this country, of obesity in pets. It's exactly the same problem that is occurring in people. We love our pets to death, some people say. Pets are suffering from all of the maladies that occur from overeating, from gaining too much weight, to too little exercise, and I think treats really play a big role here.

Some treats that are out there today have over 100 calories per treat. They're very palatable. Dogs love them and react very positively to them. We really have to keep in mind that our pets can't manage their weight, we have to manage their weight in order for them to live a long, happy and healthy life. Maintaining a slightly lean body mass throughout a dog or a cat's life is really important to their health.

We have to be very careful about how many treats we give and how many calories we're adding to their diet so that we don't abuse the benefits of rewarding our pets.

Braxton's:

What are the benefits of all-natural ingredients for pets?

Dr. Townshend:

The natural pet food companies, the quality pet food companies, like WellPet, where food is manufactured with a natural philosophy in mind really have quality protein, fats and carbohydrates in their diets, just like many other diets. Natural diets are designed to provide the very best natural nutrition without synthetic man-made ingredients in those products, as much as possible. There are some vitamins that really have to be synthetic in a diet, but the basic protein, fats, carbohydrates and supplements are as natural as we can make them.

Not only quality protein, fats and carbohydrates, which of course are all natural, but there are companies like WellPet that also use fruits and vegetables to get natural vitamins, minerals and other benefits, especially antioxidants that occur in blueberries, cranberries and some vegetables as well.

Natural products also go far beyond just basic nutrition. They provide lots of supplements that really do have significant benefit to a pet beyond basic nutrition, such as probiotics, those good bacteria that are essential for a healthy immune system, as well as the digestive tract; glucosamine and chondroitin for joint health; omega-3 fats or fish oils for heart health and kidney health; added digestive supplements to enhance digestibility to get the very best benefit from quality proteins and fats.

You can feed the very best protein, fats and carbohydrates, but if our digestive tract is not in an optimum condition and it doesn't have everything that a pet needs for proper digestion, we may not be getting all the benefits that are available from those quality protein, fats and carbohydrates. Digestive health is extremely important, and natural products like Holistic Select provide optimum nutrition for the digestive tract and optimum support.

Braxton's:

Do you have any special pet tips for keeping a well-balanced diet?

Dr. Townshend:

I think it's important for pet parents to understand that manufacturers of quality pet foods today spend a great deal of time and especially money in developing complete and balanced diets. Those diets really don't need supplementation of basic nutrition, protein, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. They are complete and balanced. They are actually regulated or monitored by government agencies so you can rest assured when the label says that they are complete and balanced.

It's really important to understand that if you begin to supplement you may alter that balance. I wouldn't add much more than about 10 percent of the total diet. Keep in mind that you are increasing calories which can really encourage obesity, and you may alter mineral ratios with one another. You may alter that complete and balanced concept if you add more than about 10 percent. Be very careful with that, and make sure that you rely on manufacturers. Make sure you're feeding your pet a quality food from a quality manufacturer.

Braxton's:

Tell us a little bit about WellPet. When did it start and what is its core philosophy?

Dr. Townshend:

WellPet is the new kid on the block. WellPet started in 2009. We're a really great company. We are actually two companies that came together in 2009. The Holistic Select and Eagle Pack Company and the Wellness Old Mother Hubbard Company came together in 2009. The Holistic Select and Eagle Pack manufacturing facility in Mishawaka, Indiana is now set up to manufacture all of our WellPet dry products, including Wellness. They're all manufactured in our own facility in Indiana, or will be at the end of this year when all of that transition is complete.

We're very proud that we are two of the most popular natural pet food companies in the United States, if not the world. It's really great that we've come together. We've brought all of the resources from Holistic Select /Eagle Pack and Wellness/Old Mother Hubbard together to provide quality products that are going to go as far as natural products can go in enhancing the quality of life of our pets, and extending that life.

Braxton's:

Where can readers learn more about you and your company?

Dr. Townshend:

I would suggest they go to www.WellPet.com. That's our basic site. We have information about many of our employees, we have information about all of our products, and we have information about WellPet in general. That's a great place to start when you're looking for information about any of our foods or any of our philosophies or manufacturing principles.