

# GOOD

## eggs

By Kymmythy R Schultze CN AHI

**In** this article, we're going to discuss a very popular hotspot in dog nutrition. "Oh boy," you may be thinking; "another article on skin problems!" I'm sorry for the confusion. But that's eggxactly (sorry, couldn't help it) what this article is about; the confusion surrounding feeding your dog eggs. It seems to be a real mental hotspot of differing opinions and uncertainty.

Warnings of the dangers of feeding raw eggs to your dog abound, yet the basis for the fearsome forewarning isn't always clear or accurate. So, let's crack this topic open, unscramble the confusion and turn it into sunnyside-up understanding (note to self; don't write while hungry)!

### The Big B

One of the anti-egg warnings is that feeding raw eggs to your dog will cause a biotin deficiency. Biotin, found in egg yolk, is in the B-complex group of vitamins and is connected to skin, hair, and nail health. A lesser known fact is that biotin is also anti-fungal. So, obviously, biotin is a good thing to have around in your dog's body.

So why the scare about feeding raw eggs to your dog if they

contain this wonderful nutrient? It's because eggs also contain a protein called avidin, which is a biotin-binding protein. And so the worry goes that feeding avidin-containing raw eggs (all raw eggs contain avidin) will cause a biotin deficiency in your dog, which would affect your dog's health in a negative way.

Let's take a closer look at this bad guy named avidin found in egg whites. It turns out that avidin may not be that bad after all. Avidin makes up only about 0.05% of the protein found in eggs. Research has postulated that the natural function of avidin may actually serve as a bacterial growth inhibitor in the oviduct as it's shown to have the ability to knock out some strains of bacteria in the lab.

The big scare about avidin sucking the life out of your dog if you feed raw eggs most probably comes from a study done in 1963,

in which laboratory dogs were fed a controlled diet containing enormous amounts of egg whites every day. These dogs were not fed whole eggs, only the whites.

After a while, the dogs developed symptoms of biotin deficiency.

Unfortunately, as is often the case with research studies, the results ended up trickling through



the information network like the cliché game where one person tells their neighbor something and by the time it reaches the next town, the message has morphed into something quite different than the original.

Feeding a whole egg to your dog a couple of times weekly is very different from how the lab dogs were fed. If avidin removes a little biotin from the body, the egg has your dog's back by providing a good dose of it in a nice little yummy package!

### The Other Big B

Another concern for some folks contemplating feeding raw eggs to their dogs is the fear of salmonella bacteria. It's certainly possible that a raw egg that's been cracked open and left out to sit for a while could provide a haven for bacteria. Yet, that's not usually how you feed your dog.

Most dogs love eggs and will scarf them down immediately. It's extremely unlikely that you'll find salmonella inside an egg that has not had its shell cracked or broken. Scientists estimate that the chance of salmonella bacteria being inside an intact egg to be about 0.005%.

And it's not only that the likelihood of having a contaminated egg is low, the conditions also have to be just right to encourage bacterial growth. If you're concerned, yet would like to feed raw eggs, check to make sure the shells are intact before purchase and don't leave a broken egg out at room temperature any longer than it takes to feed it to your eager dog.

### Cholesterol?

This question comes up less frequently than the others, yet some folks are curious to know if they should be concerned. Here we'll take another little trip, and fall, down memory lane.

One of the major studies influencing our concern with eggs and cholesterol was done in 1912 in which rabbits were fed a lot of eggs (I know, seems like a cruel joke on the Easter Bunny). Feeding lots of eggs to rabbits caused health issues for the rabbits. Thus it was decided that eggs increase cholesterol, which was deemed a bad thing.



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It's interesting to note that another study was done feeding eggs to rabbits and those rabbits did not have the same health issues. Hmm, what's up Doc? The difference is that the eggs in the first study were oxidized and the eggs in the second study were not. How does one oxidize eggs? You either cook them or leave them exposed to oxygen for a long period of time. Raw eggs have not been shown to cause high cholesterol problems in dogs.

### Crack Open The Good News

Eggs pack a plethora of nifty needed nutrients in a neat little package. The array of vitamins and minerals found in eggs is extremely extensive and impressive. That biotin isn't alone! Eggs are a source of protein and good fats. And pasture raised chickens produce super-eggs. Eggs from pastured hens can contain as much as ten times more omega-3 fatty acids (the ones we clamor to get more of into our dogs and ourselves) than factory raised hens. Eggs from pastured hens are also richer in vitamin D; a vitamin that we are finding to be vitally important to good health. And look to the egg for health-giving antioxidants! Two antioxidants, lutein and zeaxanthin, are essential for eye health, and eggs are the richest source.

Obviously, eggs were included in the diets of our dog's closest relative, the wolf. Plus, animal caregivers have been feeding raw eggs to their furry friends for thousands of years. Heck, even my Snoopy cookbook I had as a child (and I'm not exactly a spring chicken) recommended giving my dog a raw egg once in a while for a shiny coat. It seems that Snoopy, brother wolf, and our ancestors' dogs have all benefited from the inclusion of whole raw eggs in their diet.

A whole raw egg is a tasty nutrient-dense gift from our feathered friends and would be part of a natural canid diet. Feeding excessive amounts of broken, oxidized egg whites would not be. Besides, the latter sure seems like a lot of work to me. I'd rather just play egg-toss with my dogs and not mind that they eat the game! 🐾

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