

Toward a healthier food for Fido: Corn provides promising fiber alternative

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Corn fiber may provide a healthier, more economical ingredient in dog food than fibers now in use, a new study shows. Credit: Courtesy of USDA-Agricultural Research Service

In addition to helping fill gasoline tanks with alcohol-based fuel, corn may have a new role in filling Fido's bowl with more healthful food, nutritional biochemists in Illinois are reporting. They found that corn fiber shows promise as a more economical and healthier ingredient in dog food than some of the fibers now in use. Their study is scheduled for the March 26 issue of ACS' *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

George Fahey and colleagues point out that the fiber content of dog food varies widely and is often of inferior quality. Many dog foods use fiber from sugar beet pulp. Corn fiber — available in large amounts as a byproduct of ethanol production — is an attractive alternative. However, researchers have little information on corn fiber's effects in dogs.

In the new study, researchers studied digestion, food intake, and fecal characteristics in dogs fed either a special food containing corn fiber or a standard food containing beet fiber. Substituting corn fiber for beet fiber “does not dramatically

impact nutrient digestibility, food intake, or fecal production and characteristics,” the researchers say.

Corn fiber should therefore be considered a promising fiber alternative for use in dog food, they note. Previous studies suggest that corn fiber in animal food could have beneficial effects in reducing risks of obesity and diabetes.

Source: ACS

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