

# The 21 Longest-Living Dog Breeds

Is your dog's breed on this list of long-living dogs? The good news is, even if it's not, you can still positively affect the up or down regulation of genes that play a role in your pup's lifespan. These four actions can go a long way toward helping your dog live a long, healthy life.

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If you're a dog lover, you know that our pets don't live nearly as long as we'd like them to; that's why one of the qualities many prospective dog parents look for is longevity
- A recent list of the 21 longest-lived dog breeds is filled with small breeds, who often live twice as long as giant breed dogs
- While certain inherited physical characteristics like size influence how long dogs live, so does environment and lifestyle
- Unless you're a breeder, the genetic makeup of your dog is outside your control; however, there are many things you can do to support your pet's good health and longevity

If you're thinking about adding a dog to your household, chances are you're hoping to have your new canine family member around for a very long time.

With that thought in mind, many prospective dog parents make a deliberate effort to look for breeds known for their longevity, which is often based first and foremost on size. Generally speaking, the smaller the breed, the longer the lifespan. The littlest dogs can live into their late teens or even early 20s, whereas giant breeds like Newfoundlands and Great Danes often live only half that long. According to PetMD, the 21 longest lived dog breeds are:

- Chihuahua
- Dachshund
- Toy Poodle
- Shih Tzu
- Maltese
- Beagle
- Yorkshire Terrier
- Miniature Schnauzer
- Lhasa Apso
- Bichon Frise
- Affenpinscher
- Cavalier King Charles Spaniel

- Shiba Inu
- Australian Shepherd
- Papillon
- Australian Cattle Dog
- Parson Russell Terrier
- Chinese Crested
- Miniature Pinscher
- Russell Terrier
- Pomeranian

The average lifespan of these breeds ranges from a low of 10 years to a high of 18.

## How to Help Your Dog Have a Long, Healthy Life

We know that certain inherited physical characteristics influence how long dogs live, for example, their size, breed and the **shape of their heads and muzzles**, so it's clear that genetics play a role in the canine lifespan. But so does a dog's environment and lifestyle.

According to the geneticists we interviewed when writing our New York Times best-selling book, *The Forever Dog*, genetics account for about 20% of the diseases that affect our pets, while 80% remain environmental, or within our control. This means we can dramatically influence whether our pets live healthy, long lives by the choices we make for them.

And even within the realm of genetics, there are still environmental influences at play. Obviously, the genes your dog inherited are outside your control, but you can potentially exert a positive epigenetic effect on the up or down regulation of those genes by modulating your pet's environment.

For example, dogs aren't born with progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) or dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM); they're born with normal organ function, and then either express the DNA they are carrying, or not. The good news is there are many things you can do to nurture good epigenetic health and a long life in your furry best friend, just by making a series of healthy choices, day after day and year after year.

1. **Feed less ultraprocessed food and more real food** — When it comes to helping your dog have a long, vibrant life, there is no single thing more important than providing him with healthy food. No registered dietitian will tell you to eat more highly processed foods as a strategy for improved wellbeing, and neither will health-oriented veterinarians.

To be optimally healthy, animals need less highly processed food (kibble and canned diets) and more real, identifiable food, including high quality animal protein, healthy fats, and a small amount of high-fiber, microbiome-building vegetables and fruits that provide antioxidants, polyphenols and bioactives (chemical compounds in plants that confer medicinal benefits).

These macronutrients should be in balanced proportions to meet your animal's optimal nutrient intake. This is why a "complete and balanced" diet is so important to folks that know; meeting minimum nutrient requirements

isn't something you should guess at.

There are dozens of commercially available fresh pet food companies making great diets or you can follow a balanced recipe and make your own fresh meals (you'll know if a recipe meets daily recommended allowances if it comes with a complete nutritional analysis showing the nutrient breakdown of the recipe).

If you can't afford to feed an entire meal of real food, you can replace 20% of your dog's "fast food" with 20% real food (commercial or homemade) and still make a big difference in her overall health. To gauge the nutritional quality of the diet you're currently feeding your pet, see my list of best-to-worst pet foods. You can also use this list for guidance on how to improve your dog's diet.

2. **Refuse needless vaccinations** — Responsibly ensuring protective immunity via a titer test makes you a wise immune system advocate for your pet. Of course, we want our animals protected against preventable diseases, but continuing to vaccinate immunized animals is pointless and can be harmful.

Over-vaccinating already-protected animals can create serious short and long-term health problems. Yes, many pets enjoy long lives despite yearly re-vaccinations, but many others develop vaccine-associated sarcomas, autoimmune disorders, and other life-threatening diseases.

Because there's no way to tell which animals will be dramatically and negatively affected by excessive immune stimulation via too many vaccines, titer testing should replace annual and automatic "booster shots" in most cases.

3. **Perform at-home exams and schedule regular wellness visits with your veterinarian** — Our dogs can't tell us when they hurt or feel sick. That's why it's so important for pet parents to perform routine do-it-yourself at-home checkups. It's a great way to detect changes in your dog's health as soon as they occur so that you can take immediate action. It's also a great bonding opportunity for you and your pet.

My recommendation for veterinary wellness exams is twice yearly in a healthy pet. Older pets and those with chronic conditions may need to be seen more often. If two visits a year isn't feasible for you, I strongly urge at least an annual wellness visit to your vet.

I also encourage you to have an integrative or functional medicine practitioner on your pet's health care team. There is a lot that can be done to intentionally prevent degeneration from occurring if a proactive wellness protocol and a wellness-oriented lifestyle management regimen is initiated early in a pet's life.

4. **Regularly enrich your dog's environment** — Environmental enrichment means enhancing your pet's surroundings and lifestyle so that he is presented with novelty in his environment, opportunities to learn, and encouragement to engage in instinctive, species-specific behaviors. Ways to do this can include:
  - Providing a rotating supply of different types of toys in varying shapes, sizes, textures, colors, and scents to engage all of your dog's senses
  - Ensuring he receives adequate daily exercise/playtime
  - Taking him on different types of walks
  - Providing him with regular opportunities for social enrichment, for example, visits to the dog park, play dates with other dogs, or involvement in activities such as agility and nose work

If there's room for improvement in your dog's lifestyle, it's never too late to think about what you can do differently to help your four-legged family member enjoy better health and longevity.

## Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [PetMD, January 4, 2023](#)

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