

## **Sunflower Sprouts for Pets**

By Dr. Karen Becker

Hi, I'm Dr. Karen Becker. Most dogs and cats, if given the opportunity, will eat grass occasionally or even on a regular basis because they know instinctively that it improves their gastrointestinal health. Unfortunately, grass isn't typically very nutritious, even pet grass. Outdoor grass has the potential to be laden with fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, or other animal wastes where parasites and contaminants could be.

If your pet likes or needs to eat grass now and then, my question is, have you ever considered growing your own sunflower sprouts to offer them instead?

Sprouts actually can provide a very easy and inexpensive source of fresh, live organic vegetation for your dog or cat to graze on. Seeds are the first life stage of the plant and sprouts are the second stage of a plant's life. They are the tiny stems of the plants that emerge from wet seeds before they put down roots and become full-grown plants. After a few days of germinating, these little plants are packed with a ton of nutrients. In fact, pound for pound, many sprouts contain significantly more digestible vitamins, minerals, proteins, and enzymes than the adult versions of the same plant.

Sprouts are rich in enzymes, making them almost pre-digested, similar to plant matter that wild dogs and cats would be ingesting from the stomach content and the GI tracts of their prey animals if they were eating them.

Unlike vegetables, which can be difficult for pets to digest, if they're consumed whole and if they're not ground up, during the sprouting phase, much of the starch that's contained in the tiny plant or seed is broken down into simple sugars by amylase. The proteins are converted into amino acids by amides and proteases, and the fats and oils are turned into simple fatty acids by lipase.

### **Benefits of Sprouts**

Sprouts have many beneficial attributes. They support cell regeneration; They're very powerful, natural wholefood sources of antioxidants, minerals, and vitamins; And the enzymes that are included also help protect against free radical damage.

Sprouts have an alkalizing effect on the body, which is thought to protect against diseases including cancers, as many types of tumors and cancers pull the body into a state of acidity. They are abundantly rich in oxygen, which can also help protect against abnormal cell growth, viruses, and bacteria that opportunistically may be able to survive in a body that's not necessarily oxygen-rich.

In addition to their nutritional benefits, sunflower sprouts are also the ultimate in homegrown foods. When you grow them yourself using organic seeds, you can be sure that you're not exposing your pet to any type of harmful pesticides or other types of chemicals.

Sunflower sprouts are also among the least expensive foods you could ever consider buying or growing for your dog or cat to graze on. Interestingly, if you don't provide healthful things around your house, living foods for your cats to eat, they will probably end up eating your house plants. So, this is a really healthy alternative to your cats trying to eat your house plants.

If you grow them yourself, you can cut the cost by about 90 percent or more compared to buying sprouts from a grocery store.

### **Sprouting Process**

When sprouting your own seeds, it's best to ensure they haven't been chemically treated, so buy organic seeds. You're going to soak them overnight in water, in a mason jar, with a mesh sprouting screen. The soak time depends on the type of seed you're sprouting: five hours for small seeds and up to 12 hours for really large seeds and grains.

In the morning, you're going to drain that fluid off. I pour that fluid in my plants. It's really good water for watering your plants. Then you're going to begin rinsing them. You're going to turn the jar on its side and allow the water to drain out. You're going to repeat this rinsing process three times a day until the little seeds sprout.

On average, sprouting time takes about three days. Rinsing and draining them three times a day gives them just the right amount of moisture, and also rinses some of the toxins that could be in the seeds off.

Your container should be about a quarter to a third full of seeds. They swell; actually, they get about eight times bigger than their original size over the next three days. I do recommend you keep the jar at room temperature with really good air circulation. At my house, I put it under the counter, under my sink.

Once the green tips begin appearing on the sprouts, you can begin feeding them to your pets right away or you can refrigerate or plant them.

Now, you certainly don't have to go to the sprouting to plant them. Dr. Mercola just puts the seeds in the soil and grows them. That's fine. I like the sprouting phase because it speeds the whole process up. So at this point, once they grow little tails, you can put them in dirt and grow them as regular small plants.

If you do grow them in soil, you can harvest your sprouts in about a week. A pound of seeds will produce at least 10 pounds of sunflower sprouts, which is a great yield.

Of all the different kinds of sprouts, sunflower shoots produce the most volume. In one 10"x10" tray, you can harvest between one and two pounds of sunflower sprouts. You can store them in the refrigerator for about a week after you harvest them.

At my house, I simply put the tray down on the ground and let my pack nibble and graze on them throughout the day. At night, I lift them up and put them on the counter. It's interesting because my kitties will get up and just graze on them once they're on the counter.

If you're sharing your harvest with your family, you can snip off sprouts, and then put them in your pet's food bowl or on top of their regular food. All of my pets regulate their own grass and sprouts intake. I don't have to limit their access to sprouts because they do a really good job with boundaries. If, by chance, you have a dog that obsesses about eating them and so you're not going to put the tray on the

ground, you can just harvest your sprouts and the general rule of thumb is to offer about eighth to a quarter of a cup of sprouts for every 20 pounds of animal you're feeding a day.

*[END]*