

A Healthy, Cheesy Treat for Your Pet

If your pet isn't lactose-intolerant, try smearing a small amount of this creamy food to their lick mat. You can also add it to their pet treat recipes — here are a couple of ideas to help you get started!

Reviewed by Dr. Becker



STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If your pet is not dairy- or lactose-intolerant, then you can safely feed them cottage cheese as a treat
- Cottage cheese is a good source of protein. This macronutrient is the primary structural component of an animal's skin, muscles, tendons and fur
- Cottage cheese contains calcium, which is a necessary mineral for maintaining strong and healthy bones
- When buying cottage cheese, make sure to choose one that's made from the milk of organically raised, grass fed cows

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published March 23, 2022.

Known for its mildly sour flavor and lumpy appearance, cottage cheese is a type of fresh cheese that's made by acidifying milk with either a starter culture that produces lactic acid or an acidic ingredient like vinegar. The mixture is left to sit at room temperature for a few hours to form semi-solid curds, which are then cut and washed to remove excess water and acidity.^{1,2}

Although cottage cheese may not be as popular as its dairy cousin yogurt, most pets love cottage cheese. Continue reading to learn more about the benefits that cottage cheese has to offer and how you can include it in your pet's enrichment program.

Where Did Cottage Cheese Come from?



Although the origin of cottage cheese is still unclear, some people believe it to be one of the first cheeses that was made in America.³ Today, New York is one of the leading states in the production of cottage cheese.⁴



But First: Should You Be Concerned About Its Lactose Content?

"If your pet is not dairy- or lactose-intolerant, then you can safely feed them cottage cheese as a treat or as part of their nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate homemade diet."

Cottage cheese contains lower amounts of lactose compared to other cheeses, since its lactose content is broken down during the manufacturing process, so it's less likely to cause stomach upset.⁵ If your pet is not dairy-sensitive and you're planning to include cottage cheese in your pet's diet, make sure all "extras," including cottage cheese, constitute less than 10% of your pet's daily calorie intake.

Proteins Are Vital for Your Pet's Life Processes

Cottage cheese is a good source of protein, providing your pet 1.51 grams per 1-tablespoon serving.⁶ This macronutrient is the primary structural component of an animal's skin, muscles, tendons and fur. According to an article from Oregon State University:⁷

"Proteins are also involved in biochemical (e.g., enzymes), immunological (e.g., immunoglobulins), transportational (e.g., lipoproteins), and other regulatory (e.g., hormones) activities. Proteins can also provide energy when needed. Many of the structures in animal tissue (e.g., muscle) and metabolic reactions (e.g., enzymes, hormones) are catalyzed by proteins. Therefore, protein synthesis is essential for maintaining life process."

Research also shows that a deficiency in protein can lead to a lower body mass and a higher risk of morbidity and early mortality, especially in older dogs, which is why it's important to ensure that this macronutrient is present in your dog's diet as they age.⁸

Calcium Plays Structural and Functional Roles in Your Pet's Body

Just like milk, cottage cheese contains calcium, a necessary mineral for maintaining strong and healthy bones. According to an article in *Veterinary Clinics: Small Animal Practice*, imbalanced calcium intake during growth can result in limb deformities and fractures in animals, which is why this mineral is essential to a complete and balanced diet.⁹

Calcium also plays a role in a variety of physiological processes in the body, including blood vessel function, nerve transmission, hormone regulation and muscular contraction.¹⁰ Your pet can obtain 14.19 milligrams of this essential mineral per 1-tablespoon serving of cottage cheese.¹¹



Did You Know?

Plain cottage cheese has lower levels of fat and sodium compared to other cheeses,¹² making it kidney-friendly and a good dairy of choice to reduce your pet's risk of obesity.^{13,14}



Choosing the Healthiest Cottage Cheese for Your Pet

When buying cottage cheese, make sure to choose one that's made from the raw milk of grass fed cows that are humanely raised in environmentally friendly farming conditions. Since pasture-raised cows are not routinely injected with antibiotics, their milk and milk derivatives will not put your family, including your pets, at risk of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Grass fed milk has also been found to be more nutritious than its non-grass fed counterparts, which may affect the overall nutritional value of cottage cheese.¹⁵

Aside from making sure that your cottage cheese comes from organic trustworthy farms, you should also watch out for additional ingredients that could be harmful to your pet, including onions, chives and other seasonings. Opt for plain organic, grass fed cottage cheese instead. Better yet, make your own cottage cheese at home.



Cottage Cheese Fun Fact

Cottage cheese is likely called as such because it was originally made in cottage houses using leftover milk.¹⁶ The term became popularly used during the 19th century to refer to a preparation of curds that was often served with crackers or bread.¹⁷



Here Are Healthy Cottage Cheese Treats Your Pet Will Love!

Because of its scoopable texture, cottage cheese can be a great food to use with environmental enrichment toys, including "stuffable" rubber or silicon food-dispensing toys, or smeared on lick mats. If you want to create an exciting snack for your pet, try making the easy-to-follow recipes below. Remember that healthy treats like these should only make up less than 10% of your pet's daily calorie intake.

Turkey Balls

Ingredients:

- 🐾 1 cup ground turkey
- 🐾 1 egg
- 🐾 1 teaspoon chopped parsley
- 🐾 1/4 cup cottage cheese
- 🐾 1/2 cup sweet potato, cooked, peeled and mashed

Directions:

1. Mix all the ingredients together, and then roll into 1-inch balls.
2. Place on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 325 degrees Fahrenheit for 45 minutes.
3. Let cool once done.

Tip: Store extra turkey balls in the freezer or refrigerator and consume within one week. If stored in the freezer, this treat can stay fresh for up to three months.

Kidney Kisses

Ingredients:

- 🐾 1/2 cup cottage cheese
- 🐾 1 cup potato flour
- 🐾 1 teaspoon fresh chopped parsley

Directions:

1. Mix all the ingredients together. You can use your fingers to mix the dough (make sure you wash your hands thoroughly before doing this). The dough may turn out lumpy, but this is all right.
2. Roll the dough into 1-inch balls and flatten them with the bottom of a glass. Place on a baking sheet and bake at 275 degrees Fahrenheit for 40 minutes.

Tip: Store extra portions in the freezer or refrigerator and consume within one week. If stored in the freezer, they can stay fresh for up to three months.

Note: This treat is ideal for pets with kidney issues, as cottage cheese is a kidney-friendly food.

Sources and References

¹ [The California Dairy Press Room & Resources, Cottage Cheese](#)

^{2,12} [The Atlantic, March 24, 2019](#)

³ [Undeniably Dairy, June 24, 2016](#)

⁴ [Office of the New York State Comptroller, A Profile of Agriculture in New York State](#)

⁵ [American Kennel Club, September 21, 2023](#)

^{6,11} [USDA FoodData Central, Cheese, cottage, lowfat, 2% milkfat](#)

⁷ [Oregon State University, A Guide to the Principles of Animal Nutrition - Proteins](#)

⁸ [Top Companion Anim Med. 2008 Aug;23\(3\):154-7](#)

⁹ [Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice, Volume 51, Issue 3, P623-634, May 01, 2021](#)

¹⁰ [NIH Office of Dietary Supplements, Calcium](#)

¹³ [Science Direct, Cottage Cheese](#)

¹⁴ [Action on Salt, Salt and the Kidneys](#)

¹⁵ [Br J Nutr. 2016 Mar 28; 115\(6\): 994–1011](#)

¹⁶ [Cheese.com, Cottage Cheese](#)

¹⁷ [Britannica, Cottage Cheese](#)
