

This Sweet and Refreshing Snack Your Pets Can Enjoy Safely

Well-loved during warm seasons because of its thirst-quenching juiciness, this lycopene-rich fruit makes for a refreshing pet treat that can also provide many beneficial nutrients. Read this to find out how you can feed it to your pet in the healthiest way possible.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)



STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- If you're wondering whether it's OK to let your pet enjoy watermelon, you'll be pleased to know that it is, indeed, one of the best food choices to share with them during warm days
- One of the carotenoids present in watermelon is lycopene, a potent antioxidant that may help protect your pet against oxidative stress, which could damage their cells and organs
- Another carotenoid found in watermelon is beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant and immune modulator that acts as the primary precursor of vitamin A
- Watermelon contains ascorbic acid (vitamin C), which may help support tissue growth, reduce oxidative stress and regulate immune functions
- Always use common sense when feeding watermelon to your animal companion. Feed it to them the same way you would eat this fruit — without the seeds and the rind

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Watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) is a fruit that has been around for thousands of years, yet it continues to be well-loved because of its juiciness and thirst-quenching properties. If you're wondering whether it's OK to let your pet enjoy watermelon, you'll be pleased to know that it is, indeed, one of the best choices of fruits to share with them during warm days. Read on to learn more about the health benefits that your pet can obtain from watermelon.

Watermelon May Help Hydrate Your Pet

It's obvious from the name — watermelon is one of the most water-rich fruits, containing 92% water.¹ In people, eating a slice of watermelon can help rehydrate as much as a cup of water would.² The same hydrating properties can be enjoyed by your animal companion even if you feed them this fruit in smaller amounts, as a tablespoon of watermelon contains around 9 milliliters of water.³ In addition to providing your pet an ample supply of clean water, giving them this fruit can be a tasty way to keep them rehydrated, especially during sweltering summer days.



Watermelon Fun Fact

Because of their high water content, early explorers used to carry watermelons during their travels and used them as a source of fluids.⁴



Watermelon Is Not Just Water and Sugar

Because it's composed of mostly water, watermelon has been wrongly accused of just being a mixture of sugar and water.⁵ This could lead pet parents into thinking that watermelon is bad for their pet's health as well as theirs. However, studies have shown that watermelon actually offers a number of health-promoting vitamins and phytochemicals (more about this later).⁶

Misinformation about many healthy fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds abounds on the internet. This is because websites have labeled all risks (such as the risk of over-consumption causing gastrointestinal issues, or choking on too large of pieces or pits) as "toxicities," which isn't true but has managed to confuse millions of pet lovers, nonetheless.

If you're worried about feeding watermelon to your pet, don't be. Serving watermelon as a treat or as an addition to a nutritionally adequate, species-appropriate diet can be good for their health.

Healthy treats like this should comprise less than 10% of your pet's daily caloric intake. Of course, always use common sense when feeding watermelon to your animal companion. Feed it to them the same way you would eat this fruit — without the seeds and the rind.

Watermelon Is a Good Source of Lycopene

One of the carotenoids present in watermelon is lycopene, which gives its flesh a distinctive red color. According to a study published in the *Experimental and Clinical Sciences Journal*, red-fleshed watermelons contain 40% more lycopene than tomatoes.⁷

"Lycopene is a potent antioxidant that may help protect your pet against oxidative stress, which could damage their cells and organs."

Studies have also shown that lycopene has anti-inflammatory, antidiabetes and anticancer properties.⁸ One study published in the *American Journal of Veterinary Research* analyzed its effects on canine osteosarcoma, a common and aggressive type of bone cancer that primarily affects large breed dogs. Their results show that lycopene caused "mild to pronounced" reduction in cancer cell growth, as well as cancer cell death.⁹

The researchers also concluded that lycopene may aid in the treatment of osteosarcoma, warranting further studies into the use of this compound as "an adjuvant antiproliferative, proapoptotic treatment in dogs with osteosarcoma."¹⁰

Another animal study published in the *Journal of Experimental and Clinical Cancer Research* looked into the chemopreventive effect of lycopene and found that it may help inhibit cancer by "modulating lipid peroxidation and enhancing antioxidants in the target organ as well as in the liver and erythrocytes."¹¹



Did You Know?

The first documented watermelon harvest dates back to 5,000 years ago in ancient Egypt. Egyptians placed watermelons in the burial tombs, as they're believed to nourish the souls of those who passed away.¹²



This Refreshing Fruit Provides Your Pet with Beta-Carotene

Another carotenoid found in watermelon is beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant and immune-modulator that acts as the primary precursor of vitamin A.¹³ By being converted to vitamin A, beta-carotene plays a role in your pet's visual health, bone growth, reproductive health, cellular differentiation and immune response.¹⁴

One study published in the Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine evaluated the effect of this carotenoid on the immunological responses of old and young dogs. Results showed that it "significantly restored" the immune responses of old dogs.¹⁵ Similar results were also observed from a study published in the Journal of Nutrition, which found that dogs that absorb lower amounts of beta-carotene experience impaired immune response.¹⁶

Ascorbic Acid May Help Boost Your Pet's Immune Health

Watermelon contains ascorbic acid, the form of vitamin C that naturally occurs in foods. While cats and dogs can synthesize vitamin C in their liver unlike humans, there are still instances when they may experience a lack in this vitamin. Stress, in particular, has been linked to vitamin C depletion in dogs.¹⁷

An article published in Topics in Companion Animal Medicine highlighted the role of vitamin C in several metabolic functions in your pet's body, including "tissue growth and maintenance, amelioration of oxidative stress and immune regulation."¹⁸ The researchers also suggest that this vitamin may aid in the treatment of critically ill dogs and cats.¹⁹

Watermelon Contains Important B Vitamins, Too

Aside from phytochemicals, watermelon also provides your pet with B vitamins, particularly vitamin B1 (thiamine) and vitamin B6 (pyridoxine).²⁰ According to an article published in Veterinary Sciences, thiamine is "an essential dietary nutrient in dogs and cats" that plays an important role in energy metabolism and nervous system function.²¹ Pyridoxine, on the other hand, is important for skin health. A deficiency in this nutrient has been linked to "dull, waxy, unkempt coat with fine scales and patchy alopecia."²²

Where Do Watermelons Grow?



Watermelons are native to the Kalahari desert of Africa. They spread north across Mediterranean countries and into Europe before eventually reaching other parts of the world.²³ Today, watermelons are grown across the U.S., with the top-producing states being Texas, Florida, Georgia and California.²⁴



Try Making This Watermelon Healthy Pet Treat Recipe Today

Aside from giving your pets their own watermelon slices that have been seeded and removed from the rind, you also have the option of making frozen treats to help your pets beat the heat. Here's an easy way to make healthy frozen watermelon treats for your pets:

1. Remove the seeds from the watermelon.
2. Scoop out the watermelon from the rind.
3. Blend the pieces to make a puree.
4. Pour the puree into ice cube trays and freeze.

Organic Watermelons Are Best

If you're looking for healthy treats you can give your pets during the summer, consider giving them slices of watermelon, without the seeds and rind. This fruit is a good source of phytochemicals and vitamins that may help boost your pet's health while increasing their fluid intake.

It's important to note that watermelon ranks No. 30 in the Environmental Working Group's (EWG) list of conventionally grown produce with the highest amount of pesticide residue.²⁵ So as much as possible, make sure to choose watermelons that are grown organically or are "spray-free" to lower your pet's exposure to pesticides. You can buy them fresh from your local farmers market to ensure they're free from harmful chemicals.

Lastly, fresh fruits like this are simply "extras" in your pet's nutritionally adequate, species-appropriate diet, so remember to limit their intake.

Sources and References

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