

Letters

Alpo Bites Back

"Too Much of a Good Thing: Protein and a Dog's Diet" (April-June 1983) included two points to which we take strong exception. The article discussed information in "Stress and Your Dog", a pet owner information booklet published by the ALPO Center for Advanced Pet Study. This booklet, which has been praised by such groups as the American Institute of Stress and the Latham Foundation, describes the causes and signs of stress in dogs and what pet owners can do to minimize stress and its effects.

The first point in contention is the author's inference that the stress of a twenty-mile sled dog race cannot be related to the everyday stress experienced by household pets. In this, the author fails to recognize the cumulative nature of stress. We realize that an isolated incident such as being left alone may not evoke a response equal to that of a race, but add to it the other everyday stresses such as being placed in unfamiliar surroundings, meeting a hostile dog in the park, a trip to the veterinarian for an annual checkup, and one ends up with an accumulation of circumstances which in total may equal or exceed the stress of a big race.

The second point in your article questioned the value of increased dietary protein for stressed dogs. It was repeatedly stated that protein is mobilized during stress for the purpose of providing energy, *only after carbohydrate stores are expended*. It further suggested that increased carbohydrate might be more in order. Such does not agree with available facts as found in basic physiology textbooks.

Tissue protein is mobilized to provide amino acids for synthesis of glucose. This is an immediate response to the release of adrenocorticoid hormones. Continuous or repeated stimulation of the adrenal in response to stressors leads

to continuous or repeated release of these hormones and eventual depletion of protein reserves. This can be prevented or slowed by feeding of a high protein, energy dense diet. The red blood cell response was used in the stress studies as a measure of the adequacy of protein reserves.

The article not only questions the need for added protein in meeting the demands of stress, it quotes Dr. Mark Morris, Jr. as stating that, "High protein dog food is not good for your dog." Such statements have long been made by Dr. Morris, but he has never presented anything more than opinion to back them up. The work of Bovee, which Dr. Morris so readily dismissed, showed that high protein diets were not detrimental to dogs with reduced renal mass and actually improved the function of the remnant kidneys in these dogs. The paper of Brenner, *et al.* so often quoted by Dr. Morris was not a report of original research, but a review of old literature covering research in rats and other species which admittedly by Dr. Brenner, if not by Dr. Morris, does not fit the dog.

The final point that I would like to make is one totally ignored by the article and one that could put the comments of Dr. Morris in a different light for many readers. Dr. Morris, head of Mark Morris Associates, is professionally related to a company, Hill's Pet Products, Inc., which manufactures a line of diets, Prescription Diets, the mainstay of which is a low protein diet purported to be, though never shown in controlled clinical trials, efficacious in the dietary management of acute or chronic renal failure, urolithiasis, hepatic disease, congestive heart failure, and endocrine imbalances. Included in Hill's company literature is the following statement: "Formulation, ingredients and product specifications of all Prescription Diet products by Mark Morris Assa-

ciates." Dr. Morris is entitled to his opinions, but the author should not interpret Dr. Morris' opinions as proven scientific fact without adequate research.

Allen Products Company has always met such charges with research to get at the facts. The work of Bovee was sponsored by a grant to the University of Pennsylvania by the ALPO Center for Advanced Pet Study. The materials for the booklet "Stress and Your Dog" came out of research headed by Dr. David Kronfeld and funded by a grant to the same university. Stress and kidney disease are on-

ly two of many areas that have been or now are being supported to increase our knowledge of diet and nutrition in relation to canine health and disease. We are proud of the contributions we have made and continue to make towards the welfare of animals.

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*Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1958.

**J.H. Perkins, Insects, food and hunger: the paradox of plenty for U.S. entomology 1920-1970. *Environmental Review* 7:71-96. 1983.