

Have You Tried Adding This Juicy Treat to Your Pet's Diet?

Abundant in phytochemicals and immune-boosting antioxidants, this slightly tart fruit can be added to your pet's food bowl but remember to first remove the pit. Keep reading to find out how your pet can benefit from it.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker



STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Plums come in different varieties and colors, with the most popular kind having a dark purple-red skin and yellow flesh
- As with other members of the Rosaceae plant family, plums are abundant in phytochemicals and antioxidants that can help boost your pet's well-being
- Remove the hard pit before feeding the plum to your pet or using it in pet treat recipes to prevent it from becoming a choking risk and to avoid its cyanide content
- Your pet can get beta-carotene (vitamin A precursor), vitamins E, C, and K, as well as B vitamins like niacin, riboflavin, folate, and pantothenic acid from plums
- Dogs and cats only need minimal but crucial amounts of fiber from their diet, so adding small quantities of vegetables and fresh fruits like plums (or prunes) to their meals can help build their microbiome

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Summer is a great time to enjoy fruits, and if your pet loves to snack on them, there are several delicious options to choose from. Plums may be one that you're skipping because of the many misinformation about these small, juicy fruits, but the good news is that if you prepare them properly, they can be a good addition to your pet's nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate meals. Keep reading to learn more about the benefits of plums to dogs and cats.

What Are Plums and What Do They Taste Like?

Plums (Prunus) belong to the Rosaceae plant family and are closely related to fruits like cherry and peach. They come in different varieties and colors, with the most popular type featuring dark purple-red skin and yellow flesh. All plums have a stone (pit) in the center, which should never be eaten — more on this later.¹

Plums have a firm but easy-to-bite texture. They are sweet and juicy, with a tart aftertaste. Some varieties are sweeter than others, while others are slightly more sour. These fruits can be enjoyed raw, as a snack, or added to recipes for jams, sauces, or sweet or savory dishes for humans.²



Did You Know?



Dried plums are called prunes, which are commonly enjoyed as a snack. Don't confuse them with raisins, though — raisins (and grapes) are unsafe for pets, but pitted prunes can be shared with them in small quantities.³



Plums Are Rich in Polyphenols

As with other members of the Rosaceae plant family, plums are abundant in phytochemicals and antioxidants that may help boost your pet's well-being. Bioactive compounds like caffeic acid, phenolics, anthocyanins, and carotenoids are some examples and may be beneficial for bone, heart, and gastrointestinal health.⁴ In fact, one study noted that plums had 4.4 times higher antioxidant activity than apples.⁵ According to a paper in the Journal of Food, Nutrition and Population Health:⁶

“The predominant phenolic compounds in plums are derivatives of caffeic acid: 3-O-caffeicquinic (neochlorogenic acid), 5-O-caffeicquinic (chlorogenic acid) and 4-O-caffe-icquinic (cryptochlorogenic acid) as well as caffeic acid, together with smaller amounts of anthocyanins, flavanols and flavonols.”

Caffeic acid, a hydroxycinnamic acid that is the primary polyphenol in plums, was found to have antimicrobial, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and antiviral properties.⁷ In a 2017 study, its antiviral potential was found to help inhibit the canine distemper virus (CDV) in Vero cells, reducing the risk of infection in dogs.⁸

Meanwhile, anthocyanins were found to help improve cognitive function in elderly pets. According to a Korean study conducted on elderly dogs, adding supplementary anthocyanin may have a neuroprotective effect in elderly companion dogs.⁹

Vitamins and Fiber Are Also Found in Plums

Your pet can get beta-carotene (vitamin A precursor), vitamins E, C, and K, as well as B vitamins like niacin, riboflavin, folate, and pantothenic acid from plums.¹⁰ All of these are beneficial to their well-being and may help promote immunity and boost overall health. For example, riboflavin and niacin may help facilitate enzyme function, while vitamins C and E are potent antioxidants that can protect against free radicals and oxidative damage.¹¹

Plums and prunes are also rich in both soluble and insoluble fiber.¹² Soluble fiber dissolves in water and promotes a smooth passage of food through the GI tract. It's more digestible than insoluble fiber. Meanwhile, insoluble fiber speeds up the rate at which food passes through.

Though indigestible and has little or no nutrient value, fiber does play an important role in your pet's digestive process. Dogs and cats only need minimal but crucial amounts of fiber from their diet, so adding small quantities of vegetables and fresh fruits like plums (or prunes) to their meals can help build their microbiome, encourage diversity and provide roughage for optimal bowel health.

Despite their impressive nutritional profile, many pet parents are wary about feeding plums to pets, believing they can pose certain dangers. However, plums are perfectly safe for pets as long as you feed these fruits to them correctly.



Plums Trivia



Plums have a gentle laxative effect and are even called “nature’s remedy.” This is mainly due to the high fiber content of these fruits, which also promotes healthy digestion.¹³



Remove the Pits Before Feeding Plums to Your Pets

There’s a lot of misinformation surrounding healthy fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds on the internet. This is because websites have labeled all risks (such as overconsumption 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.

In the case of plums, the primary concern is the cyanide content found in the pit of the fruit, as well as the plant’s foliage and roots. If ingested, it may lead to gastric irritation and respiratory distress.¹⁴

However, this can be easily sidestepped by removing the hard pit before feeding the plum to your pet or using it in homemade pet treat recipes. This will also prevent the pit from becoming a choking risk, especially to smaller breed pets.¹⁵ If you have a plum tree growing in your garden, make sure to keep your pet away from it.

Top Plum Producers in the World



China produces nearly 7 million tons of plums every year, which is approximately half of the world’s overall plum supply. Romania is in second place, which produces half a million tons of this fruit yearly. In third place is the United States, which makes 390,000 tons of plums per year, most of which is grown in the state of California.¹⁶



Are Plums Sustainable?

According to Impactful Ninja, plums are one of the top carbon-emitting fruits, with a carbon footprint of 0.4 kilogram (0.88 pound) CO₂e per pound. This is mainly caused by their high rates of land use, pesticide applications, harvesting methods, packaging and transportation. They require 50 inches of water per year.¹⁷

If you’re buying plums, make sure to choose organic, spray-free plums to reduce your exposure to toxic pesticides.

Sources and References

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