

The importance of nutrition has been increasingly recognized, but veterinarians often feel unprepared to deal with this aspect of health care. Factor in the number of pet food options on the market and the competing advertising campaigns and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. This three hour lecture series aims to provide practical, clinically relevant information on integrating nutritional assessment into the exam, how to interpret labels and product guides with case based examples for both healthy and diseased pets, and an overview on some hot topic issues.

Interpreting Labels and product guides with case based examples

This lecture works best as an introduction to the case based examples featured in the second lecture.

How do you gain assurance that a particular diet will meet your patient's needs? How do you choose between two therapeutic diets labeled for the same purpose?

Knowing the key nutritional factors or nutritional goals for an individual patient is often the first step. This will vary with life-stage, difference in health or disease state, and other individual differences and is outside the scope of this lecture. Practicing veterinarians, however, often know the key nutritional factors for an individual patient or disease condition already, but may be unable to translate this into how an individual diet may or may not meet these goals.

Understanding the information provided on a pet food label, as well as the limitations of this information is the first step. The second part is knowing what information may be available from a manufacturer, when it's worth the extra step of acquiring this information, and how this information may assist you. For some diets, this information may already be provided in a product guide. However, many (if not most) practicing veterinarians haven't received training on how to interpret and apply this information. This lecture will introduce some basic tools and foundational concepts for assessing information from pet food labels, extra-label manufacturer resources, and product guides. Clinical application of this information will then be demonstrated through case-based examples.

Learning objective:

Understand and utilize information provided by pet food manufacturers in a clinically relevant way.

Take home message: Good pet food manufacturers can often provide a plethora of information that can aid a practitioner in deciding on the appropriateness of a diet for a patient, allowing more personalized nutrition and greater confidence in dietary recommendations.

Nutrition: the 5th vital assessment

A continuation of the first lecture, working towards integrating the above information and other basic nutritional tools into the exam and ending with case-based examples.

Nutrition is relevant to overall pet care and patient health but is often an ignored factor of management due to time constraints, lack of awareness, or lack of confidence dealing with this issue. The first step in addressing this is to make a proper general nutritional assessment an integrated part of the exam and to then recognize when an extended assessment is warranted. Secondly, it's

important to feel comfortable and confident in certain foundational principles regarding nutrition for cats and dogs. This will assist you in critically evaluating individual diets for adequacy and safety. Ultimately, the goal is to identify patients at risk for nutritionally related problems, allowing the opportunity for counseling on proper nutrition or intervention. This lecture aims to review general concepts in dog and cat nutrition, highlight the integration of nutritional assessment in the exam, emphasize key areas of possible concern, and to review the foundational principles for evaluating diets for our companion animals.

Learning objective:

Learn how to incorporate nutritional assessment into the exam

Take home message: Nutrition is a vital part of both preventative and interventional medicine and incorporation of nutrition into patient assessment and care allows veterinarians to better serve their clients and patients.

Marketing, Myth, Magic? Separating fact from fiction...

Pet food is a multi-billion dollar industry and there are a lot of diets competing for their market share. As veterinarians, it is impossible to be familiar with every single available diet. Beyond that, various marketing campaigns and the dissemination of misleading or false information by various sources had led to a lot of confusion among both pet owners and veterinarians. Additionally, trends in the pet food market sometimes follow those seen in the human market, adding an additional layer of complexity. As veterinarians, it is important to remember two things: our recommendations should, first, do no harm. Secondly, the practice of medicine is rooted in science and we should be looking to differentiate information based on scientifically validated evidence versus a lack thereof. Therefore, recommendations should adhere to the goal of first fulfilling established nutritional goals while doing no harm. Although there may be fundamental differences in feeding philosophies or beliefs surrounding the feeding of our companion animals, it is important to be able to discern those practices which may be harmful from those that pose no additional risk to a pet, regardless of whether they offer additional benefit.

To this end, this lecture will overview some hot topic issues such as grain-free and the feeding of by-products, and the use of alternative diets or feeding practices such as raw or home-cooked diets. Within this overview, the goal will be to present evidence-based information to discern fact from fiction, while answering the question of how alternative feeding practices can be most safely implemented for our patients.

Learning objective:

Review major hot topic issues and feeding practices with a focus on fact or evidence-based information to learn how to best counsel clients and to alert practitioners to potentially harmful feeding practices or the need for alternate recommendations.

Take home message: Focusing on evidence based information and remembering core nutritional tenets will help veterinarians discern nutritional fact from fiction and assist in supporting nutritional recommendations that are prudent.