

OBESITY

PFMA supports all pet professionals with advice as obesity still a major issue, says **Nicole Paley**



For the past four years PFMA has been speaking to pet professionals about nutrition. At the London Vet Show, our aim was to speak to the veterinary profession, discuss the current pet food and small animal nutrition topics and see how PFMA can support them in their role of providing nutrition advice to pet owners.

Recently, we have noticed that pet retailers have an increasingly important role in helping pet owners with their feeding decisions. As the range of food on offer has expanded, owners need more advice when navigating the huge range of products. PFMA is equally keen to ensure retailers – as well as vets - have access to all the information they need. Today's consumer has a thirst for knowledge and they want to be well informed about the food they buy for their family, which of course includes their pet.

A THIRST FOR MORE KNOWLEDGE

PFMA surveyed 177 vets at London Vet Show (November) 2016 and found that 63 percent of vets would like more online nutrition resources for example, webinars, 61 percent would like more face-to-face education such as seminars and 53 percent would appreciate more non-branded generic leaflets and posters to hand to clients. A survey of retailers at PATS Telford 2016 highlighted that almost 60 percent of retailers are keen for some nutrition training and 80 percent would like to receive regular pet food factsheets from PFMA.

PFMA has developed an online library of factsheets, which cover a broad range of pet food and nutrition topics from additives and labelling to the importance of hay for rabbits. These resources can be used by professionals as well as owners to broaden knowledge and answer specific nutrition queries.

GROWING CONFIDENCE IN PET FOOD

The LVS 2016 survey also confirmed a

growing confidence in prepared pet food. 97 percent of the veterinary professionals agreed that prepared pet food provides optimum nutrition when fed correctly and 89 percent agreed pets are living healthier lives as a result of this advanced nutrition. Levels of confidence have risen six percent and nine percent respectively over the last year.

OBESITY STILL A SIGNIFICANT HEALTH CONCERN

Unfortunately however, obesity is still a huge concern and veterinary professionals confirmed that 49 percent of dogs, 44 percent cats, 32 percent small mammals and 11 percent of birds are obese. With almost 80 percent of retailers providing generic advice to owners of overweight pets, there is a real opportunity for collaboration across the pet care sector.

PFMA has developed a series of Pet Size-O-Meters (pet owner friendly charts to help owners assess whether their pet is a healthy size) for cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs and pet birds. PFMA encourages owners to keep a more conscious eye on their pet's shape by using these charts as part of their regular home care routine.

The charts can be downloaded from the PFMA website or hard copies can be requested online. Many vet practices use the Pet Size-O-Meters for their weight management clinics and increasingly retailers are giving them as handouts to owners or using the display posters for visuals in the shop.

HUMANISATION OF PETS AND THE IMPACT ON FEEDING CHOICES

For the second year running PFMA held a Seminar at LVS 2016 called 'Humanisation of pets: part of the family but not at the table', which was well attended. With topics including 'DIY Diets: Do's and Don'ts' and 'Coeliac dogs, cholesterol in cats and other fairy stories', PFMA looked at the deeply entrenched trend of anthropomorphism of

Rabbit Size-O-Meter

Dog Size-O-Meter

Bird Size-O-Meter

Pet Food Additives

NATURAL INGREDIENTS

VITAMIN B

VITAMIN E

pets and how this is impacting pet nutrition. Guest speakers included Dr. Marge Chandler and Dr. Cecilia Villaverde, both Board Certified Nutritionists – veterinary experts in small animal nutrition, who looked at the science behind a number of issues including gluten intolerance in cats and dogs and grain-free diets. 🐾

These presentations are now available to view at: www.pfma.org.uk/presentations - excellent in-house training material.

For the full range of PFMA educational tools, please visit: www.pfma.org.uk.

If there are any topics or issues currently not covered by the PFMA that you would like information on, please contact nicole@pfma.org.uk