



Vet Survey shows growing confidence in prepared pet food - BUT obesity still a growing concern

A survey commissioned by the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association (PFMA) of 177 vets at London Vet Show (LVS) 2016 confirmed a growing confidence in prepared pet food. 97% of the veterinary professionals agreed that prepared pet food provides optimum nutrition when fed correctly and 89% agreed pets on average are living healthier lives as a result of today's advanced knowledge of nutrition. Levels of confidence have risen 6% and 9% respectively over the last year.

Unfortunately, however, obesity is still a huge concern and veterinary professionals estimated that 49% of dogs, 44% cats, 32% small mammals and 11% birds are obese. Participants also voiced their concerns about teaching on the subject of pet nutrition. Figures were up 14% with 79% citing current level of teaching was inadequate.

PFMA is committed to education on the subject of pet nutrition and for the second-year running held a Seminar at LVS 2016, which was once again extremely well attended. The event entitled 'Humanisation of pets: part of the family but not at the table' looked at the deeply entrenched trend of anthropomorphism of pets and how this is impacting food decisions of pet owners, not always to the benefit of pets.

Discussions delved deeper into how vets and vet nurses can support pet owners in making the correct nutrition choices for their pets. Under the heading 'Coeliac dogs, cholesterol in cats and other fairy stories', Dr. Marge Chandler focused on the prevalence of gluten intolerance in both pets and people and highlighted that true prevalence for both is actually very low. Grain free diets and the role of carbohydrates in pet foods was also covered, indicating that both cats and dogs can digest cooked starch.

Dr. Cecilia Villaverde, considered 'DIY Diets; Dos and Don'ts' and highlighted the main reasons some owners chose this option including enjoyment - people cook for themselves, they like to cook for their pets, personal beliefs, cost and mistrust of commercial pet foods. However, Dr. Villaverde concluded that whilst it is possible to provide a nutritionally balanced homemade diet, this

requires input from a small animal veterinary nutritionist in formulating the diet and strict compliance from the owner. Twice yearly wellness visits were also recommended for pets on a homemade diet. Dr. Villaverde highlighted that homemade diets can be particularly beneficial for pets that are unwell and do not want to eat a commercial diet or have a condition for which no commercial diet is available.

Nick Edwards of the Veterinary Poisons Information Service, highlighted common human foods toxic to pets including onion, garlic, chocolate, grapes and raisins.

Miss the event or like to hear more? All these presentations are available at:

<http://www.pfma.org.uk/presentations>

The LVS 2016 survey findings also confirmed that 63% of vets would like more online nutrition resources for example webinars, 61% would like more face-to-face education such as seminars and 53% would appreciate more non-branded generic leaflets and posters to hand to clients. PFMA has been working to deliver just that.

PFMA Tools for Veterinary Professionals

PFMA has an online library of tools and education resources to help vet professionals remain well informed about small animal nutrition. The strength of these tools is that they're evidence-based, generic, non-branded and free.

Pet Food Factsheets

Our highly-respected series of fact sheets and posters cover a wide range of pet food and nutrition topics from Labelling and Additives to the Importance of Hay for Rabbits. The latest additions include factsheets on proteins and carbohydrates in pet foods and a summary of the various pet food formats looking at wet, dry and commercial raw products. These can work for in-house training or to share with clients.

Pet Size-O-Meters for cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs and pet birds

PFMA has developed a series of Pet Size-O-Meters (pet owner friendly

PET FOOD



versions of the Body Condition Score Chart) for cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs and pet birds.

PFMA encourages owners to keep a more conscious eye on their pets' 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 requested online. Many vet practices use the Pet Size-O-Meters for their weight management clinics and display posters are also available.

Other weight management tools include:

An online calorie calculator for adult dogs and cats, 'Did you Know' Poster comparing human and pet food, Weight Log, Food Diary and a Family Pet Pledge.

All the resources can be viewed and ordered from: www.pfma.org.uk. The content is also available for you to link to and share via your digital channels.