



Developing a Nutrition Program in Your Practice

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YOUR PRACTICE'S NUTRITION MESSAGE: WHAT TO INCLUDE

The key to developing a successful nutrition program is to maintain a consistent message in all areas of the practice. Defining the practice's philosophy on nutrition and training the entire staff on the key points are the best ways to communicate this message to the client. This message should be put in writing; some factors to consider when developing it include:

Current Issues: Where does the practice stand on current nutrition issues, such as:

- » High-protein foods for cats
- » Grain-free diets
- » Raw diets
- » Homemade diets
- » Holistic or complementary approaches to nutrition
- » Supplements/nutraceuticals.

Body Condition Score: Which scoring system will the practice use (1–5/5 or 1–9/9) to determine BCS? Illustrated scales should be available for reference.

Caloric Calculations: Which method will the practice use to determine caloric requirements (ie, maintenance energy requirement versus resting energy requirement)?

Practice Recommendations: Does the practice carry specific lines of pet food? Why were they chosen? The specific benefits of these foods should be outlined in writing to help team members explain why certain foods are recommended for certain pets.

Additional Food Options: Does the practice recommend specific grocery store brands of pet food? Creating a list of these foods is helpful for both team members and pet owners.

Treats: What treats are recommended and what amount are recommended on a daily basis (percentage of daily diet)?

Nutrition Consults: At what point does a patient require a specific nutrition consult versus addressing its diet as part of a regular examination?

Nutrition Plans: What step-wise process will be used to develop a patient's nutrition plan?

- » Complete a nutrition assessment (BCS, current versus ideal caloric intake, etc).
- » Formulate nutrition guidelines specific to that patient.
- » Communicate the nutrition plan to the owner.
- » Follow-up regularly with owner to determine plan's success.

Referrals: When should a patient be referred to a nutrition specialist, who should that be, and what clinical information should be sent to the specialist?

Practice Team Education: How will the practice enhance the nutrition knowledge of its veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and other team members? What type of in-clinic training will be utilized? What outside resources (eg, conferences, certification) will be pursued?

Client Education: What types of tools will the practice use to help educate clients about nutrition? The practice's website, social media, newsletters, handouts? What nutrition topics will be addressed?

Visit the **American College of Veterinary Nutrition (acvn.org)** and **Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians (nutritiontechs.org)** for further information on veterinary nutrition as well as additional factors to consider when developing your practice's nutrition message.