Feeding Guidelines for Dogs & Cats with Cancer Based on Nutrition Status

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STATUS	CLINICAL CRITERIA	SUGGESTED FEEDING APPROACH	PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS	SPECIFIC FEEDING GUIDELINES
Well Nourished	• **Consistent intake** of daily energy needs (DER) • **Body condition score (BCS):** Optimal to overweight/obese • **Body weight (BW):** Stable • **Muscle mass score:** 2 to 3 • **Albumin:** Normal • **Nutrient losses** (ie, diarrhea, vomiting/regurgitation, urinary): None	Voluntary intake (VI)	**Optimal BW & BCS** • **Continue** current diet intake to maintain optimal BCS. • **Avoid** offering food containing noxious, harmful ingredients. • **Provide** fresh water at all times. **Overweight/Obese (BCS > 6/9)** • **Target** daily calorie intake for BCS 5/9 to 6/9.	1. **Calculate RER**[a] at current or ideal BW. 2. **Calculate DER.**[b] 3. **Choose** commercial moist or dry diets, or cooked homemade diet, with low CHO and increased fat, EPA/DHA, and digestibility. *For overweight/obese pets,* chose restricted fat, higher protein diets. 4. **Avoid** supplemental AOX during anticancer therapy. 5. **Feed** 2 to 3 times daily. 6. **Assess** regularly.
Borderline Malnourished	• **Inconsistent intake** of daily energy needs (RER to DER) • **BCS:** Variable • **BW:** Weight loss of < 10% • **Muscle mass score:** 1 to 2 • **Albumin:** Normal to mild hypoalbuminemia • **Nutrient losses:** Moderate, but controlled	Voluntary intake and/or assisted feeding (AF)[c]	• **Ensure** pet's DER is met and address specific nutrient concerns. • **Identify** and feed appropriate diet amount. • **Monitor** daily intake. • **Use** hand or enteric tube feeding.[d] When using assisted feeding, minimize risk of aspiration by elevating the head and upper body for 15 to 30 minutes post feeding.	1. **Calculate RER** at optimal BW. 2. **Calculate DER.**[b] 3. **Choose** diet based on guidelines above; human liquid diets can also be considered.[e] 4. **Feed** 2 to 4 times daily; combine VI and AF as enteric tube feeding when needed to ensure DER intake; AF as bolus feeding. 5. **Assess** daily or weekly.
Significantly Malnourished	• **Daily energy intake** < 66% RER • **BCS:** Poor (< 2.5/5 or 3/9) • **BW:** Undesired/uncontrolled weight loss > 10% • **Muscle mass score:** 0 to 2 • **Albumin:** Moderate to severe hypoalbuminemia • **Nutrient losses:** Ongoing, uncontrolled	Assisted feeding	• **Target** the pet's daily RER to DER intake. • **Feed** by hand, enteric tube, or parenteral nutrition (PN).[f]	1. **Calculate RER** at optimal BW for ***in hospital*** and ***at home*** feeding. 2. **Calculate DER.**[b] 3. **Choose** diet based on guidelines above. 4. **Feed** 3 to 6 times daily; combine VI and AF when needed to ensure DER intake; AF as bolus or constant rate infusion feeding; utilize PN alone or in combination with enteric tube feeding. 5. **Assess** daily.

a. RER = resting energy (calorie) requirement derived as:
RER (kcal ME/day) = $(BW_{kg})^{0.75} \times 70$

b. DER for well-nourished pet = daily energy (calorie) requirement, derived from a mathematical calculation:
DER (kcal ME/day) = RER × predetermined numerical factor
- **Optimal BW** – *Dogs:* DER = RER × 1.6; *Cats:* DER = RER × 1.2
- **Overweight/obese BW** – *Dogs:* DER = RER × (1–1.2); *Cats:* DER = RER × (0.8–1)
- **Borderline malnourished** – *Dogs:* DER = RER × (1.6–2.5); *Cats:* DER = RER × (1.2–2)
- **Severely malnourished** – *Dogs:* DER = RER × (1.6–3); *Cats:* DER = RER × (1.3–2.5)

c. Assisted feeding includes hand feeding, enteric feeding tube, or parenteral (IV) feeding

d. Enteric tube feeding options include: Nasoesophageal (NE), esophagostomy (E), gastrostomy (G), or jejunostomy feeding tubes; NE, E, and G tube feeding can be included in home care.

e. Human liquid diets are not ideal for cats; if fed for > 24 H, supplementation with arginine, taurine, and arachidonic acid is required.

f. Parenteral feeding is most commonly performed via a central or peripheral venous catheter and requires hospitalization and close monitoring.

AOX = antioxidants; CHO = carbohydrate; DHA = docosahexaenoic acid; EPA = eicosapentaenoic acid