

Pet NutritionSM
ALLIANCE

Optimal Nutrition for Every Pet

Tips for
Implementing
Nutrition as a
Vital Assessment
in Your Practice

Why did WSAVA develop the Nutritional Assessment Guidelines?

Nutrition is integral to optimal pet care.

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) has recognized the need to develop nutritional assessment guidelines because there are many factors to be considered in assessing the nutritional needs of a healthy dog or cat, as well as a pet with one or more medical questions. The goal of the *WSAVA Nutritional Assessment Guidelines for Dogs and Cats* is to provide a framework for veterinary staff to assist them in making nutritional assessments, and therefore nutritional recommendations, for their patients.

Good nutrition enhances pets' quality of life and is integral to optimal animal health.

Interestingly, the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) found through its Compliance Study in 2003 that only seven percent of pets that could benefit from a therapeutic food were actually on such a regimen. This data supported how critical it is to incorporate nutritional assessments and specific recommendations into regular animal care by the health care team.

To support nutrition as an integral part of the medical health care plan, WSAVA released the *Nutritional Assessment Guidelines for Dogs and Cats* in July 2011.



What do the WSAVA Nutritional Assessment Guidelines say?

When it comes to your patients, **you** are the expert — the one voice clients listen to for answers they can trust. Nutrition should be no different. According to the *WSAVA Nutritional Assessment Guidelines*, nutritional assessment is a two-part process:

A screening evaluation is performed with the initial evaluation of every pet.

As part of routine history taking and physical examination, the nutritional screening evaluation is integrated seamlessly as part of **every patient exam** and includes assessing current nutrition and amount, activity level, and age.

An extended evaluation is done when one or more nutrition-related risk factors are found or suspected based on the screening evaluation.

What are some of these risk factors?

- Age
- Activity level
- Disease condition
- Poor skin or coat
- Receiving medications and/or dietary supplements



Perform a nutritional assessment and make a specific dietary recommendation for every pet, every time.

What is the 5th Vital Assessment?

Making a nutritional assessment and specific recommendation for every pet, every time.

With every patient exam, you have the opportunity to strengthen your relationship with your clients.

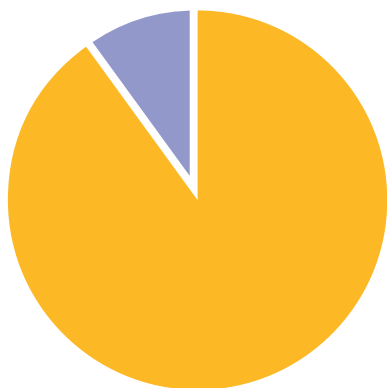
You know what T-P-R-P stands for

- **Temperature, Pulse, Respiration and Pain** are four vital assessments you record at every patient exam and are considered the standards of care
- **Nutrition** is the 5th vital assessment



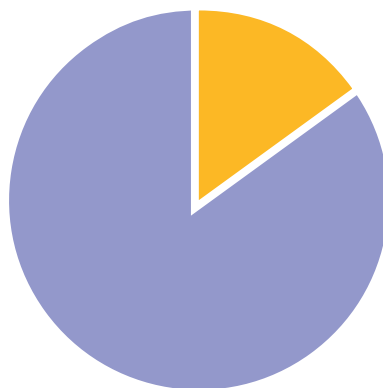
Think you're already doing it?

Only 7% of pets that **could benefit** from a therapeutic food are actually on one.¹



PET OWNERS WHO WANT A NUTRITIONAL RECOMMENDATION

90% of pet owners **want** a nutritional recommendation²



PET OWNERS WHO PERCEIVE BEING GIVEN A RECOMMENDATION

... but only 15% of pet owners perceive being **given** one.²

By making a specific nutritional recommendation for every pet at every visit, you will be strengthening relationships with your clients and meeting the needs of your patients.

FOOTNOTE

1 Quantifying Opportunities Available by Increasing Compliance Rates. *The Path to High-Quality Care: Practical Tips for Improving Compliance*. Lakewood, CO: American Animal Hospital Association; 2003:77.

2 Data on file.

The most important success factor is developing a customized written protocol for your hospital

“The purpose of any guidelines created by WSAVA is to help veterinary hospitals develop protocols that will help them practice optimal pet care. Guidelines need to be practical so they can be used in private practice, embraced and carried out by all members of the practice team.”

Dr. Jolle Kirpensteijn, WSAVA President

Successful implementation of nutrition as a vital assessment occurs when the practice adopts the following behaviors:

- Every patient receives a nutritional assessment and a specific dietary recommendation.
- The assessment and recommendation are a component of the physical exam process.
- The assessment and recommendation are recorded in the pet’s medical record.
- This process is accomplished for every pet at every exam.



Example of a protocol taken from practices that already make nutrition the 5th vital assessment.

CHECK IN

- Client fills out nutrition history/update form
- Weigh in
- Front desk staff** places nutrition history/update form in patient's records

EXAM ROOM

- Veterinary technician** records history using nutrition history form to help ask questions and initiate discussion
- Veterinarian** performs a physical exam and nutritional assessment
- Veterinarian** makes a specific nutrition recommendation and documents the recommendation in patient's records
- Veterinary technician** fills out travel log, including nutrition recommendation
- Veterinary technician** asks client if there are any questions and reinforces the recommendation
- Veterinary technician** dispenses tools (measuring cups, literature about nutrition, information packet)
- Veterinary technician** sends patient home with an information packet even if they don't purchase recommended food

CHECK OUT

- Front desk staff** asks client again if there are any questions
- Front desk staff** dispenses food and reinforces recommendation
- Front desk staff** schedules a callback in 2-7 days if recommendation is for a new food
- Front desk staff** enters reminder code for re-purchase of food two weeks before food will run out

Protocols don't have to be complex

As part of the customized protocol, documentation and evaluation are very important. Here are some examples:

DOCUMENTATION

<input type="checkbox"/> Temperature _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Pulse _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Pain _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Respiration _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Weight _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> BCS _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle condition score _____	
Current food _____		
Chief complaint _____		
History _____		

Dietary recommendation _____		

EVALUATION

An evaluation process doesn't have to be anything more than looking through records on a regular basis and asking the following questions:

	Y	N
• Nutritional assessment completed (weight, BCS, nutrition history)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Specific nutrition recommendation made?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Educational information or tools dispensed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Did client purchase the recommended food?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Have you optimized the role that nutrition can play in patient care? Every pet. Every time.

Take this self-assessment and find out!



PASSIONATE AND COMMITTED LEADERSHIP

- Do the practice owner and senior staff set an example that demonstrates a strong belief in the value of nutrition in patient care?
- Does your website or customized clinic client-education materials communicate your belief in the importance of nutrition?



TEAM APPROACH

- Does every member of the health care team understand their role with regard to incorporating nutrition into patient care?
- Is there an opportunity at patient rounds to discuss cases where nutrition has played a critical role?



BELIEF AND CULTURE

- Do all members of the health care team truly believe that it is “best medicine” to provide a nutritional assessment and specific dietary recommendation for every patient, every time as a part of the examination process?



CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

- Do you have regular staff training or rounds to agree upon and practice how to deliver consistent communication in the most effective manner?
- Does the health care team understand that good listening skills may be the most important component of effective client communication?



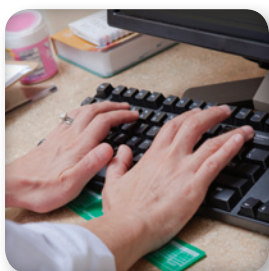
CONTINUOUS TRAINING

- Do you currently have a forum for regular staff training?
- Can **every** member of the health care team answer basic questions regarding the clinic's nutrition philosophy and key points regarding the diets you recommend?
- Your front office staff plays an essential role in optimal client communications.
- Are one or several of the veterinary technicians in your practice an in-clinic champion for nutrition or fill the role of a nutritional counselor?



DOCUMENTATION

- Does the clinic have written protocol(s) that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of every member of the health care team to ensure that every patient has a nutritional assessment and receives a dietary recommendation at every visit?



EVALUATION PROCESS

- Is there a process in place to review medical records to ensure that your clinic's nutritional protocols are being executed?

Helpful communication tips

Because of the extensive involvement of the client in the daily dietary management of their pets, client communication and rapport is **vital**. Here are some helpful communication tips and questions to ensure your clients get the right information every time they visit:



Assess the patient.

EXPLORE THE PET'S NUTRITION AND FEEDING REGIMEN

- On a normal day, what does *[pet's name]* eat? Please include any treats or people food.
- Have there been any changes to what *[pet's name]* has been eating recently?
- Has *[pet's name]* had any problems with his or her current food? With previous food?
- Are there foods that *[pet's name]* does not like? Can you tell me more?

Get a handle on the client's perspective.

EXPLORE THE CLIENT'S IDEAS AND BELIEFS

- How is *[pet's name]* current food working for you? Do you have any concerns about the food?

EXPLORE THE CLIENT'S EXPECTATIONS

- What is important to you when selecting your pet's food?
- You mentioned you are looking for what is best for *[pet's name]*; can you tell me a little more about what you mean when you say "best?"



Select a food.

Make a specific nutrition recommendation.

- We both want what is best for *[pet's name]*. Based on the information you shared with me earlier, and my experience and the research in this area, I believe [food name and form (canned and/or dry)] will be of the greatest benefit to *[pet's name]* and his/her long-term health and well-being because ...

Be sure to tell the client why you are making this particular recommendation.

Conclude your discussion of nutrition by returning to the client's perspective.

- What concerns do you have about implementing these changes?
- What challenges do you anticipate?
- What remaining questions do you have for me?

The Nutritional Assessment is a huge opportunity to make a difference in the lives of your patients and to strengthen your relationships with clients.

Take the first step toward best patient care — become familiar with the *WSAVA Nutritional Assessment Guidelines for Dogs and Cats*.

Every pet. Every time.





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PetNutritionAlliance.org

SUPPORTED BY

American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA)

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA)

American College of Veterinary Nutrition (ACVN)

American Society of Veterinary Medical Association Executives (ASVMAE)

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA)

Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc.

National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA)

World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA)