**MODULE 9: NUTRITION**

**Lesson 1: Food Types and Recommendations**

1) What brands of pet food does our clinic stock and recommend?

[Note to Trainer: If you sell Hill’s products (for example), you might want to use some of their DVDs, online coursework, and other materials to teach your class some basic nutrition information.]

**Answer:**

2) Why do we use those brands?

**Answer:**

3) Why are pet owners encouraged to avoid the lowest priced foods?

[Note to Trainer: You may wish to review some product labels and ingredient lists found on some packages of dog and cat food in your practice.]

*Sample Response: It can be difficult to tell from the label how good a pet food is; however, low priced foods usually have low cost ingredients that decrease the quality of the food. For example, “chicken by-product meal” may be made of hearts, livers, and kidneys, which can be high quality nutrition. “Chicken by-product meal” made of beaks, feathers, and feet, on the other hand, may be totally indigestible. Low cost foods can also contain nutrient excesses.*

4) Who inspects pet food? Are the labels accurate?

*Sample Response: There are many regulations about what must go on a pet food label and how foods should be manufactured; however, government supervision of pet foods is limited. Ingredients must be listed on a label in order of weight as determined on an as-is (not dry weight) basis. That is, the ingredient that weighs the most is first and the one that weighs the least is last.*

5) What is the difference between the different pet foods that our practice sells?

[Note to Trainer: The goal of this question is to discuss prescription diets versus over-the-counter diets.]

**Answer:**

6) How do you respond to a client who says, “The guy at the pet store told me Brand X that you sell is just a bunch of by-products and fillers and that I shouldn’t feed it to my dog”?

**Answer:**

7) What does our practice feed to hospitalized and boarded pets?

**Answer:**

8) How often is pet food delivered to the hospital?

**Answer:**

9) How does our practice handle special food orders (e.g., size or brand)?

**Answer:**

10) When is food ordered and when is it delivered?

**Answer:**

11) Which foods have a money back guarantee?

**Answer:**

12) How should a pet be switched from one diet to another?

[Note to Trainer: These next two examples, obesity and CKD, are meant to illustrate how important prescription diets are to the health and longevity of your patients. Prescription diets are not just meant to generate income; they play an important role in the health and longevity of the patient.]

**Answer:**

13) What is the most common nutritional problem of pets?

**Answer: Almost half of our patients are overweight or obese (Scarlett and Donaghue 1994; German 2006).**

14) How does obesity shorten life expectancy?

**Answer: Based on a study on obesity in Labrador retrievers, obesity can shorten a dog’s life span by two years (Kealy et al. 2002; Lawler et al. 2005). The impact on a cat’s lifespan is thought to be similar (Scarlett and Donaghue 1998).**

15) What is the most common nutritionally treated disease of older cats?

**Answer: The prevalence of chronic kidney disease (CKD) in older cats is very high. Among cats of all ages, the incidence is 112 per 1,000 cats (about 11%). In cats 10 years of age and older, it is estimated to be 269 cases per 1,000 cats and 491 per 1,000 cats 15 years of age or older (Ross, Polzin, and Osborne 2005).**

16) How does an appropriate prescription diet impact the life expectancy of a cat diagnosed with CRF/CKD?

[Note to Trainer: Feeding a renal diet may double life expectancy.]

**Answer: In 23 cats fed an adult maintenance diet, renal-related mortality was 17.4%. In contrast, no deaths were reported in 22 cats fed a renal diet. In a retrospective study of cats with CKD treated at 31 veterinary clinics in the Netherlands, feeding a renal diet was associated with a significant increase in median survival time: 16 months compared to seven months for cats eating a typical adult feline diet (Elliott et al. 2000; Plantings et al. 2005).**

17) Does our practice recommend large breed formula puppy foods for large breed puppies?

**Answer:**

18) At what age should a cat or dog be switched from kitten or puppy food to an adult formula?

**Answer:**

19) What food does our practice recommend to pregnant pets?

**Answer:**

20) What food does our practice recommend to nursing pets?

**Answer:**

21) What foods are used for the following diseases and how do these foods differ from regular pet foods? [2” each]

A) Osteoarthritis

**Answer:**

B) CCD (Canine Cognitive Dysfunction)

**Answer:**

C) Bladder stones in dogs

**Answer:**

D) Dental tartar

**Answer:**

E) Diabetes mellitus

**Answer:**

F) Diarrhea

**Answer:**

G) Food allergy/hyposensitivity

**Answer:**

H) FUS/calcium oxylate stones in cats

**Answer:**

I) Heart disease

**Answer:**

J) Intensive hospitalized patients/syringe feeding

**Answer:**

K) Kidney disease

**Answer:**

L) Liver disease

**Answer:**

M) Neoplasia

**Answer:**

N) Obesity

**Answer:**

O) Vomiting

**Answer:**

22) What nutrition handouts or brochures does our practice have available for clients?

**Answer:**

23) What coupons or specials are available for our clients?

**Answer:**

**MODULE 9: NUTRITION**

**Lesson 2: Common Questions about Nutrition**

1) What do you say to a client who asks how many treats to give a dog?

*Sample Response: No more than 10% of the total diet should be treats, snacks, or other items that are not nutritionally complete or balanced.*

2) What treats are good for pets with dental problems?

**Answer:**

3) What treats are acceptable for pets on prescription diets?

**Answer:**

4) Which clients would you recommend lamb and rice biscuits to?

**Answer:**

5) Are over-the-counter cat treats good for cats?

**Answer:**

6) What should owners look for when buying rawhide treats or bones for their dog?

**Answer:**

7) Which is better, pressed rawhide or regular rawhide?

*Sample Response: Pressed rawhide comes apart in smaller pieces, so these are usually safer to feed.*

8)Does our practice recommend chew hooves for dogs?

*Sample Response:* *No, they can easily fracture teeth.*

9) Does our practice recommend pig ears?

*Sample Response:* *Pig ears are very greasy, high in calories, and can carry Salmonella.*

10) Does our practice recommend feeding beef bones?

**Answer:**

11) What is a BARF diet?

**Answer: Bones and Raw Food (an uncooked homemade diet)**

12) Does our practice recommend homemade diets?

**Answer:**

13) Are “natural” diets always better?

*Sample Response: “Natural” is a marketing term and has no official or government-approved definition.*

14) Why is it dangerous to feed chicken bones to dogs?

**Answer: Chicken bones can splinter and puncture the esophagus, stomach, or intestines.**

15) What kinds of foods can cause **pancreatitis**?

**Answer: Fatty foods are linked with acute pancreatitis in dogs.**

16) Is it acceptable for owners to give their dogs chew treats and then go out to dinner?

*Sample Response: Many chew treats for dogs pose a choking hazard. It is best to supervise your dog after giving him or her treats.*

17) Explain to a client what **essential fatty acids** are.

*Sample Response: Essential fatty acids are a particular type of fat. There are two kinds commonly found in pet food, omega-3 (n-3) and omega-6 (n-6). Extra Omega-3 fatty acids are indicated in animals with osteoarthritis, dermatitis, canine cognitive dysfunction (CCD), cancer, and potentially other diseases with an inflammatory component. Fatty acids are also thought to improve immune system function.*

18) What are antioxidants?

**Answer:**

19) What are **probiotics** and what are some problems associated with the use of probiotics?

**Answer: Probiotics are so-called “good” bacteria (e.g., the kind found in the gastrointestinal tract to help digest food). When added to pet food or as supplements, they are meant to survive passage through the stomach into the lower regions of the gastrointestinal tract where they would be expected to multiply and exert positive effects. They are considered food supplements and are not regulated by any government agency such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Studies have shown that many probiotic supplements are questionable because they contain between 0.001% and 215% of the amount of bacteria listed on the label. Some products do not even indicate what bacteria are included. One study analyzed 19 brands of pet food that claimed to contain probiotics and found that most products did not contain the bacterial species listed on the label and none contained a high enough amount of bacteria to be useful (Weese and Anderson 2002; Weese and Arroyo 2003).**

20) Does our practice stock or recommend probiotic supplements? If so, which ones and why?

[Note to Trainer: If your practice cares for birds, pocket pets, reptiles, or other exotics you may wish to review nutrition as it applies to these species.]

**Answer:**

**Module 9 Suggested Reading**

College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at Texas A&M University Body Condition Score Chart.

http://www.cvm.tamu.edu/clinicalnutrition/bcs.shtml

Informational materials from the providers of the clinic’s preferred pet food brands

Veterinary Medical Center at the University of California at Davis Clinical Nutrition Program Brochure.

www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/UCVMC\_SD/pdfs/waltham\_brochure.pdf