

What to Expect from a Nutrition Consultation

Clinical nutrition stems from the philosophy that the health and wellbeing of animals is intrinsically linked to their diet. Veterinary medicine often uses diet and nutrients to treat and control disease processes. A veterinary nutritionist is a veterinarian who has undergone several years of additional medical training specific to animal nutrition. This additional training includes aspects of biochemistry, physiology, feeding regimens, commercial diet production, and diet formulation. We are excited to offer clinical nutrition consultations and resources to companion animal patients in Ontario.

Commercial Diet Consultations including Weight Loss Plans

To begin a commercial diet plan, we will work with you to determine the best way to feed your cat or dog. For example, we will consider how often your pet is fed, what textures of food your pet prefers, and whether a treat allowance is appropriate.

We will typically narrow down the diet plan to one specific diet, but we will often provide several other appropriate diet choices as alternatives in the event the initial diet is not available or does not agree with your pet. We will design a feeding plan with meal proportions and goals to reach during our consultation period. For example, we may target a reduction in itching or a 5% body weight loss within two months of beginning a new diet.

Often, but not always, a prescription diet will be recommended for our diet plan. We recommend prescription diets because they are made under stringent conditions in specialized facilities. The companies that manufacture prescription diets perform extensive scientific research and feeding trials on their products. If you have any questions regarding food manufacturers or commercial diets, feel free to ask them during the initial consultation.

All weight loss plans require the use of a prescription weight loss diet. Commercially available diets are formulated to maintain a pet's body weight (these are often called "maintenance diets"). These diets are not intended to be used for calorie restriction. In fact, simply reducing the calories of a commercial maintenance diet can risk nutrient deficiencies and may slow weight loss progression. Prescription weight loss diets are formulated to contain higher concentrations of nutrients, which ensures nutritional adequacy while restricting calories. Weight loss diets are also formulated with ingredients to help with satiety (feeling "full"), which helps prevent unwanted behaviours such as begging or stealing food.

It is highly recommended to measure commercial foods with a digital kitchen gram scale as this is the most accurate way to portion meals. Kitchen gram scales are relatively inexpensive and can be bought at many grocery stores, home goods stores, or online. If a measuring cup will be used to portion food, it is important to use an appropriate "dry goods" measuring cup (rather than a "liquid goods" measuring cup). Diet plans will typically include both a weight and a volume measurement for each diet option. If requested, a treat allowance can also be included with several appropriate treat options. Patients on dietary elimination trials will not have a treat allowance.

Each commercial diet plan includes an initial 60-minute consultation (either in person or online) after which a diet plan will be formulated. Written consultations are typically completed within 5-10 business days. Each consultation includes **five** email communications and **two** recheck appointments. Recheck appointments may be done in person or on line and involve a weight update, analyzing our goals for the consultation, and reformulation of the diet plan if necessary. Weight loss plans include **four** rechecks to allow closer monitoring of weight changes. A copy of the initial consultation and any diet plan changes will be sent to your primary veterinarian.

Home Prepared Diet Consultation

Home prepared diets require substantial monetary and time commitments. Please take this into account when requesting a diet consultation.

In general, it is not recommended to feed companion animals home prepared diets. This is because home prepared diets are subject to substantial variability, such as ingredient availability, differing cooking methods, and use of dietary supplements. Commercially available diets from reputable manufacturers are strongly recommended for all healthy animals as they follow stringent formulation guidelines and undergo regular quality control measures. Studies on home prepared diet recipes found online and within published books revealed that almost all recipes contained nutrient deficiencies or toxicities. In fact, the only recipes that were appropriately balanced for long-term feeding had been formulated by veterinary nutritionists (Stockman et al. 2013, JAVMA). Following the guidelines of several top veterinary organizations including the CVMA, AVMA, and WSAVA, we will not formulate raw diets. Information on home prepared diets, raw diets, and other helpful resources can be found at the end of this handout.

Home prepared diets are most commonly recommended for patients with extreme dietary intolerances (atopic dermatitis or chronic enteropathies) or for patients with intermittently poor appetites. Each diet is tailored specifically for an individual patient with caloric recommendations, ingredient proportions, supplement recommendations, and diet transition instructions. Home prepared diets require either a veterinary formulated vitamin and mineral supplement (BalanceIT®), or 4-6 specific human supplements to balance the diet. Some therapeutic diets require a specific prescription supplement (for example, kidney disease or copper storage disease). A daily omega-3 supplement (available through veterinarians) is often required for a home-prepared diet. These supplements are NOT considered optional, and exclusion of these supplements will lead to an unbalanced diet and nutrient deficiencies. Patients eating home prepared diets are recommended to have a physical exam and blood work performed every six months to ensure their diet does not need altering.

A home prepared diet consultation will begin with an initial 60-minute appointment (either in-person or online) to determine which ingredients are appropriate for both the owner and the patient. Often taste-testing is required to determine which ingredients are tolerated by patients. Some patients, especially cats, do not tolerate new ingredient textures and some trial-and-error

is required prior to final diet formulation. A home prepared diet recipe often includes one protein source, one carbohydrate (a starch or fibre source), and a source of essential fatty acids.

Once the final ingredients have been chosen, a written consultation is typically completed within 5-10 business days. Each consultation includes **five** email communications and **two** recheck appointments. Recheck appointments may be done in person or online and involve a weight update, analyzing our goals for the consultation, and reformulation of the diet plan if necessary. A copy of the initial consultation and any diet plan changes will be sent to your primary veterinarian.

A consultation includes one home prepared recipe. Due to the considerable time required to formulate a home prepared diet, an additional fee is required for each additional recipe formulation.

Next Steps

To request a nutrition consultation please speak to your primary veterinarian. Your veterinarian will complete a medical history form and you will complete the diet history form. Links to these forms can be found below.

We look forward to working with you and your pet in the future!

Jenna Manacki, DVM

Residency Trained in Clinical Nutrition

Medical history form for veterinarians:

<https://vectoronto.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nutrition.pdf>

Client diet history form:

https://vectoronto.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nutrition_DietHistory_ClientForm.pdf

Resources

World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) Guidelines on Selecting Pet Foods

https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Selecting-a-pet-food-for-your-pet-updated-2021_WSAVA-Global-Nutrition-Toolkit.pdf

Petfoodology Blog (Tufts University Veterinary Nutrition Service)

<https://vetnutrition.tufts.edu/petfoodology/>

Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) Raw Food Position Statement

<https://www.canadianveterinarians.net/policy-and-outreach/position-statements/statements/raw-meat-based-diets-for-pets/>

American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Raw Food Position Statement

<https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/raw-or-undercooked-animal-source-protein-cat-and-dog-diets>