

Feline Nutrition—Myths and Facts.

By Dr. Maria Berger

As a species, cats are pretty darn interesting in many ways! Their nutritional needs are no exception. This month we'll look at some of the feline attributes that contribute to myths and facts about providing our cats with optimum nutrition.

Cats are finicky. Yes, some cats are indeed very finicky about the food they eat. As a species, cats are very texture oriented creatures. Some cats learn to like the way certain foods feel in their mouths, and become very fixated on specific shapes or consistencies. Pet food manufacturers have learned to take advantage of this trait, and many cat foods have defining shapes in the hopes that the cat will learn to like this shape to the exclusion of all others. It's also not unusual for a cat that has not been exposed to canned foods as a kitten to refuse to eat it later in life—that mushy stuff just doesn't feel right, how can it be food? For other cats, it's all about the taste. Cats cannot taste sweet—they do not have the taste buds for it—but they can taste many other flavors. Unfortunately, some cats get fixated on flavors and textures that can be dangerous—such as the plastic bags that so many of them like to lick and chew.

Dry cat food is better than canned. Dry cat food is certainly more convenient to use than canned cat food, but new evidence suggests that it may not be better. Dry cat foods contain larger amounts of carbohydrates than canned cat foods. Since cats are true carnivores, they have evolved to require very small amounts of carbohydrates (CHOs) in their diet to remain healthy. The higher levels of CHOs in dry cat foods may be one of the factors responsible for the level of obesity found in our pet cat population. In addition, regular dry foods are not all that good at controlling dental disease either. Many cats do not even chew their dry food, but gulp it whole. (Dental diets are another story, but that was last month's topic!) Cats that eat some degree of canned food as part of their overall diet often have less trouble with urinary tract diseases such as crystals and feline urological syndrome (FUS). Also, for cats that will eagerly accept canned foods, we have an alternative way of getting many medications into them, bypassing the whole joke about pilling the cat. I like feeding a mix of dry and canned foods. One trick to keeping dry food fresh: if you buy large bags of food, it may get stale by time you reach the end of the bag and your cat(s) may not eat it so well. Break larger bags of food into smaller parcels and place them in freezer bags in the freezer. Defrost them as needed.

All cat foods are created equal. There are now so many brands of cat foods available on the market that I can't keep up with them anymore! It is important to remember that cats have different nutritional requirements at different stages of their lives, just like people do. The thing I like the best about "premium" pet foods (such as Science Diet and Iams), is that they guarantee two things: the exact make up of their foods, and the life stage for which a particular food is indicated. No matter what part of the country that you buy a premium food in, the food inside will match what is on the label. Believe it or not, in this country it is perfectly legal to substitute ingredients without changing the label—as long as you change it back in a set period of time. Also, did you ever look at a bag of cat food and notice that it has the words "all life stages" stamped on it somewhere on the label? In this case, even though that food may say it is for seniors, it really is a kitten type diet. It is perfectly

legal to market one type of food for all life stages as long as it meets the needs of the most needful group—in this case the kitten population. In addition to premium foods, prescription diets should be mentioned as well. These diets must be sold through a veterinarian's office. These foods are formulated to help cats who are fighting chronic illness, and must be used only where appropriate. I have found no over the counter foods that can compare to prescription diets for controlling chronic medical problems with the kidneys, bowel, bladder, teeth, and stomach.

Cats are marvelous and mysterious creatures, especially when it comes to their dietary wants and needs! If you would like to learn more about your feline friend's nutritional needs, please feel free to call us at the cat clinic.

Life Stage And Life Style Feeding

By Lisa McKeiver LVT

Life stage nutrition is feeding based on the stage of life the cat is in. Example, kittens would get kitten food, adults would get adult food and seniors would get a senior food. Life style nutrition would be based more on the cat's lifestyle. Light diets would be life style for inactive cats. There are now diets also formulated for indoor and outdoor cats, these are also life style diets.

When choosing a diet for our feline friends, we need to look at their life stage to help determine what kind of diet we need, we don't want to feed a senior or adult cat, kitten formula, too many calories for an adult and too much protein for a senior.

Once we have decided what life stage our cat is in, it is time to look at the cat's life style. If we have an active adult who goes outside we would want a formulation with enough calories to keep the cat at a good weight, unlike a sedate indoor cat who would probably need a light diet. Most lines of pet foods have many different life stages and life style foods to choose from. If you need any help choosing a diet for your pet please call or ask any staff member here at Cat Clinic North.

Safety Tip Of The Month

Easter Lilies

By Tammy Sadek, DVM



Easter lilies are very poisonous to cats. Even eating a small amount of Easter lily leaves or flowers can cause fatal kidney failure in cats. Keep these flowers away from cats! If your cat inadvertently does consume any portion of the Easter lily, call us (or after hours, the Animal Emergency Clinic) for emergency treatment of this toxicity. We will induce vomiting and use intravenous fluids and other medications to flush out the toxin. These things must be done before the cat shows signs of kidney failure to be effective, so this is a true emergency that cannot wait

CCN's Cat Of The Month: Roo VanWormer

By Christine Hoye, VA



Roo Van Wormer is a gray, female (spayed), domestic shorthair. She will be 18 years old this summer, and according to her caretakers, Heather and Rob, Roo has been a "Grumpy old lady" for most of her life. Roo is down to 1 or 2 teeth but still insists on eating dry food. She spends most of her day sleeping and is almost completely deaf now. Heather and Robert suspect Roo may be tactilely defensive to some extent, as she doesn't like to be brushed, or really even petted that much. Also Heather and Rob are quick to mention to the Staff at Cat Clinic North that all of the noise, protesting and complaining she does at CCN are not the same ones they hear at home when they "torture" her, with such unreasonable tasks like grooming.

Roo has never been the healthiest kitty, and that is perhaps part of her issues with the wider world. For years she suffered from what was diagnosed as "irritable bowel syndrome" and this was treated with some success, but then mysteriously disappeared about nine years ago. Over the years her most common ailments have included extreme constipation and various other intestinal problems, a thyroid condition and high blood pressure. Roo's most recent issue was infected anal glands, she was incredibly annoyed with the disrespectful way her caregiver's treated her (let's just say Roo is not a fan of hot compresses on her rear).

Whenever someone meets Roo, they invariably have some comments: "My goodness....she is a....talkative Kitty!" Yes Roo is quite a talker, periodically she even talks to herself and her vocal range includes meows, grunts, purrs and other noises. Every evening when Heather and Rob get home, Roo must tell them about her day. Heather and Robb know that that is what she is doing because she is not hungry and does not want to be petted, at least not until Roo has finished telling them everything that she has on her mind. Which makes one wonder "Exactly what could possible have happened while Heather and Rob were gone to warrant those urgent announcements?" Even with all off Roo's "issues" she is a very sweet cat. She never misses bedtime and always has to snuggle before she allows Heather and Rob to sleep, although this is always on her terms of course.

Admittedly Roo does not like more than five people in the whole world, but when she does decide she likes someone, that it- there is no escape. I do not know about you but I would be flattered to be part of that exclusive club.



C. C. N.'s Welcome Wagon!

By: Becky Harper

We are thrilled to welcome to the clinic our newest feline friends, along with their caring owners. They are listed here in alphabetical order beginning with, Cleopatra & George Becker, Oscar Kennett, Kitty Kirin, Smokey Ostrowski, Ariel Romesberg and Felix Snyder. We are so pleased you chose us to care for your kitty kids and look forward to seeing you all again.

What's New The "Catkins" Diet

By Jessica Czederpiltz, DVM

Unlike people and dogs who are omnivores, cats are true carnivores. This means that their bodies have different nutritional requirements and a different way of processing food than other species. Their bodies are most efficient in utilizing foods that are high in protein, moderate in fat and low in carbohydrates. If you have followed human diet trends this will sound familiar to you - it is the basis for the "Atkins" diet. Thus we jokingly refer to the feline version of this as the "Catkins" Diet.

Many nutritionalists now feel that a purely dry food diet is biochemically not the best choice for our feline companions. Dry kibble by it's very nature is higher in carbohydrates than canned food and metabolically cats have limited ability to process these carbs effectively. Combine this with the low activity lifestyle of many indoor cats and a tendency of living owners to over feed (love does not equal food), and the result is often obesity and health concerns such as diabetes and urinary tract problems.

In contrast to dry food, canned food more closely mimic the nutritional requirements of an obligate carnivore like a cat-high in protein and low in carbohydrates. With this in mind, we often prescribe canned diets for certain health conditions. Often people express concerns regarding tartar buildup as a result of feeding a canned diet. Although kibble may help prevent tartar to some degree, it does still occur with dry diets. Regardless of whether your cat eats dry or canned food home dental care and regular cleanings are the best way to maintain dental health.

So what's the best diet for your cat? Be sure to discuss nutrition at your next visit.



The Flip Side

Essential Oils—Potentially Toxic to Cats

By Maria Berger, DVM

Essential oils are highly concentrated plant products. This high level of concentration results in oils that have correspondingly high levels of pharmacologically active ingredients. As a result, these oils can be toxic to cats if they are absorbed through the skin or ingested. If you use essential oils at home or at work, your cat can become exposed in a number of ways. Since most cats are avid groomers, any oils placed on the skin or fur will most certainly be licked off. Also, curious cats that knock over and spill a bottle of essential oil, or lick at an essential oil that may be on their human caretaker, will be at the same risk. Therefore, if you have an essential oil at home, great care must be taken to assure that your feline does not get exposed to them.

Certain essential oils are so dangerous that even small amounts can cause severe illness or death. Among the most dangerous to cats are: tea tree oil, wintergreen oil and pennyroyal oil. Many people use essential oils for aromatherapy. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to suggest that our feline friends benefit from the aromas that many of us find relaxing, making the potential benefits not worth the risk of using such oils on the cat.

Essential oils should not be confused with the flower essences derived from soaking plants in spring water, such as the Bach Flower Essences. Since flower essences are highly diluted, with extremely low levels of pharmacologically active ingredients, they are safe for cats, and very helpful in relieving a variety of emotional/behavioral issues.

Feeding The Cat With Kidney Disease

Tammy Sadek DVM

The kidneys have several important jobs. Their primary job is to remove waste products from protein metabolism from the blood. They also produce hormones that stimulate red blood cell production, regulate calcium and potassium levels, and regulate blood pressure. Prescription foods for cats with kidney disease are designed to help reduce the kidneys work load. These diets are lower in protein and phosphorous, higher in calories and potassium, and are more digestible than most regular cat food. The most common prescription kidney diets are Hills K/D,[™] Purina NF[™] and Eukanuba Restricted Protein[™]. These diets can help your cat both live longer and have a better quality of life. If your cat is a fussy eater, sometimes you can make the prescription food more appealing by adding a little gravy, strong flavored cat food or meat baby food to the prescription food. It is very important that your cat receives enough calories, so sometime we need to "spice up" the prescription food with these other doods to have your pet eat enough. Many cats with kidney disease also need additional potassium supplements added to their food, or stool softeners to help prevent constipation. Please contact us if you have any questions about your cat's dietary needs!

Question Of The Month

What Is Your Opinion On Raw Diets?

By Jessica Czederpiltz, DVM

This is a controversial subject that many people feed strongly about on way of the other. We will discuss some advantages and disadvantages and let our readers decide for themselves.

Advantages

Natural: Advocates of raw diets feel that it is more natural diet for your pet as it is high in protein and fat and low in carbohydrates. An obligate carnivore like that cat is best adapted to consume such a nutritional profile (see article on "Catkins Diet").

Quality: High quality human grade ingredients that are minimally processed.

Freshness: Fresh ingredients with no preservatives or artificial flavors.

Disadvantages

Microbial Contamination: Meats are contaminated with bacteria at slaughter. Studies have been done that document a large percentage of fresh meat is contaminated with potentially pathogenic bacteria. Some of these bacteria (E. coli, Salmonella etc.) can make your pet very sick. The purpose of cooking meat is not just for taste but for decontamination.

Health Risk To Humans: Frequent handling of raw food is a risk to owners. Also, when pets eat live bacterial organisms, they also shed them in their feces. Handling contaminated feces is a risk for all, but especially the young and immunosuppressed.

Getting To Know The Staff

Dr. Kathleen Cannady

Niki Zimmerman VA



Dr. Kathleen Cannady enjoys working with cats only because of the challenge of the medical management of cats and their diseases. The areas of veterinary medicine she is particularly interested in are internal medicine, senior care, and cancer treatment. Her favorite attribute of cats in general is how they have their own agendas.

Dr. Cannady is originally from Troy, Michigan. She graduated from Michigan State University Veterinary School in 1995, where she also earned her associates degree in Veterinary Technology and her bachelors degree in science. She then went on to be a Licensed Veterinary Technician at the University of Michigan. She worked in the University Laboratory of Animal Medicine doing cancer research, anesthesia research, and as an anesthesia technician. She has worked at the Kentwood Cat Clinic and fills in as needed at the Cat Clinic North since 2001.

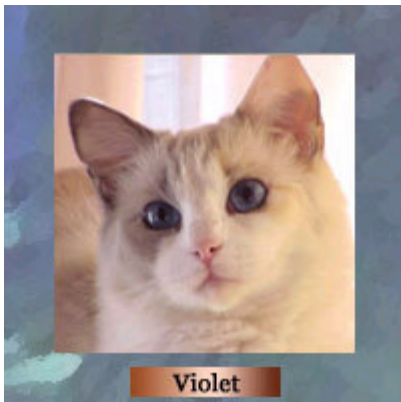
Dr. Cannady and her husband, Michael, have been married for almost seven years. She has lived on the west side of Grand Rapids for six years. She has a four year old son named Eric William. Also at home, she has a dog and three cats: Gus is a five year old

Mastiff mix dog, Harrison is a nine year old, male, orange, domestic shorthair cat, Clara is a six year old, female, brown tabby, domestic shorthair cat, and Owen is a three year old, male, orange, domestic shorthair cat.

Dr. Cannady enjoys spending her free-time gardening. She loves eating good, fresh bread. Her favorite movies are "Working Girl" and "Pretty Woman". She likes reading the Harry Potter books. Autumn is the season she enjoys most because of the color changes and the cooler weather. She dreams of someday going to Ireland and Wales to see all the beautiful countryside. Her favorite vacation destination she has visited was when she went to Aruba mainly because she loved the weather.

Breed of The Month - The Ragdoll

Deanne VaiVada



Are you the type of person that loves for a cat to cuddle with you? If so the Ragdoll is definitely the breed for you. Ragdolls are known for their relaxed attitude and the attention they crave. If you are not home very often, then I do not recommend this breed for you because of the simple fact that the ragdoll loves to be near their owner and others that they

love. The Ragdoll is the type of cat that has to be near people quite a bit. But seriously who wouldn't want to be around these adorable little faces all the time?

Ragdolls like to do some odd things for a cat at times. It is mainly in their traits, the odd things are retrieving and enjoying water. Many Ragdolls love to fetch balls of paper or toys and bring them to the owners. It is their way of saying 'look what I brought you because I love you.' Also when you take a shower or a bath be very careful because you never know when you might end up with one of these cuties in with you. Ragdolls are just fascinated with water and the sound it makes, the plus side of them enjoying water is that giving a bath should be a breeze. If you have a Ragdoll kitten start on them young with the procedure of getting a bath. Giving a bath twice a month will also help keep down the allergens.

Now, Ragdolls come in a variety of colors. The most common color is bicolor which happens to be the only color pattern recognized for championship status of the CFA. The markings of the bicolor is white inverted V on the face and white continuing down allover thier bodies to the base of their tail. Van is being completely white other than the points of ears, mask of face, and tail. Colorpoint is another color pattern of the Ragdoll. Now this color pattern is having no white of their bodies at all. The fourth color pattern is mitted which means that they have white front toes, white back legs to the hock and a white chest and chin.

The Ragdoll originated in the U.S. in the mid-sixties in Riverside, CA by a woman named Ann Baker. Her neighbor's cat Josephine was having long haired kittens with non-matting coats and very docile dispositions. Ann Baker decided to take a Persian and

breed it with one of Josephine's kittens. It took some time but eventually the Ragdoll breed was born. The reason she named them Ragdolls is because they go completely limp and relaxed in your arms like a child's ragdoll.

Grooming a Ragdoll is very simple. Their coat is non-matting so combing them out a few times a month should keep their coat in very good condition. Their coat is long but don't worry, give them a bath a couple of times will keep them clean and help keep the allergens down, too.

Well I hope that you did learn quite a bit about the Ragdoll breed and if you have thought of getting one this article gave you a little more information to help you with your search. If you have any questions on this breed or any suggestions for next months breed feel free to e-mail me at baby_girl2002_402@yahoo.com.



Fond Farewells

By Becky Harper



Our following friends have crossed over to the rainbow bridge. We would like to say goodbye to Sydney Edgerly, Tiny Jackson and Snowpuddle Rodgers. They will be missed more than words can express

