



### Lane Songer, DVM Greensboro Veterinary Hospital

Prior to becoming a veterinarian, Dr. Lane Songer enjoyed a successful career as a Registered Nurse for over 20 years. Dr. Songer obtained her BS in Nursing from Radford University in Virginia, and her DVM from the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine. She and her husband, T.J., have returned to North Carolina after many years, and currently reside in Greensboro with their cat, Miss

PeePee, and their dog, Eddy. Their son, Cole, recently graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in Computer Science Engineering and also resides in Greensboro, where he is employed by a software company and enjoys free-lance web development. Besides working in the profession she loves, Dr. Songer likes being outdoors, especially hiking, kayaking and fishing.

Dr. Songer is a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association, the North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association, and the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association. With her experience in the human and veterinary medical fields, she possesses a strong interest in the One Health concept, "a worldwide strategy for expanding interdisciplinary collaborations and communications in all aspects of health care for humans, animals and the environment." Her professional interests also include animal nutrition and preventive care, believing that proper nutrition and preventive medicine are vital for a pet's health, well being and longevity. Dr. Songer not only enjoys working with animals, but with clients as well, especially in regards to educating clients about their pets, disease processes, and public health. She looks forward to working with and developing long-lasting relationships with you and your pets!

## NUTRITION AND YOUR PET

Proper nutrition is vital throughout all stages of your pet's life, and your pet's nutritional needs can change frequently. Regular visits with your veterinarian for preventive care, including a nutritional consultation, are of great value in keeping your pet happy and healthy.

Nutrition is not just about giving your pet food every day. There are many factors to consider when thinking about your pet's nutritional health, such as:

**AGE:** A senior pet will have very different energy requirements than a growing puppy, as well as changes in mobility, brain function and muscle mass, which can all be aided by proper nutrition. Make sure to feed your pet a diet designated specifically for his or her age.

**SPECIES:** A cat's nutritional needs vary greatly from a dog's. For example, the amino acid taurine is crucial for cats to prevent serious eye and heart problems. Commercially prepared cat foods provide this necessary nutrient. This is just one reason why cats should not be fed dog food. It is important to consult with a veterinary nutritionist if you are preparing a homemade diet for your pet to ensure that they are receiving the nutrients they need.

**LACTATION/PREGNANCY:** A dog or cat that is pregnant or nursing their young require increased caloric intake in order to maintain their own ideal body condition while providing proper nutrition for their young.

**ACTIVITY:** A very active dog, such as a herding or athletic dog, will have very different caloric requirements than a sedentary one.

**DISEASE:** A sick or injured animal's nutritional requirements can vary greatly. The animal may have increased nutrient losses that must be replaced, such as losses from vomiting, diarrhea, abscesses, draining wounds or kidney disease. Or the animal may have increased nutrient requirements for healing, as in cases of trauma, fever, or chronic lung disease.

**WEATHER:** Extremes in heat and cold can also affect your pet's dietary needs. An animal may have limited activity during hot weather, requiring fewer calories, but require more energy to maintain body heat in the cold weather.

Each pet is an individual and each individual's nutritional needs must be addressed, met and maintained. Make sure to discuss your pet's diet with your veterinarian at every visit to ensure your pet's unique nutritional needs are being met.

A key part of proper nutrition for your pet is maintaining optimal body condition and weight. Weight management in pets is crucial and can be quite difficult to manage - or quite easy. Excess weight in pets, just like with humans, can lead to serious health issues such as diseases of the joints, digestive tract, kidneys and heart. Maintaining a healthy, ideal weight will reduce stress on the body and help prevent serious disease.

Feeding your pet twice daily instead of leaving a bowl of food out for all-day grazing is beneficial. This may take some "tough love" on your part, but your pet will not starve, despite the guilty looks you may receive for the first few days. At meal time, put your pet's food bowl down and give him/her about 20-30 minutes to eat, then pick up the bowl. It won't take long for your pet to realize that if he/she does not eat when the food is provided, then they will have to wait until the next meal.

Decreasing the amount of food and treats fed daily can also help. Make sure to consult with your veterinarian regarding the amount of food your pet requires, and take into consideration your pet's individual physiologic factors as well. It is important to give your pet high quality, nutritionally sound treats in proper amounts. There are many commercially prepared treats that are "empty calories" for your pet and will only serve to put weight on your pet while providing little to no nutritional value. Try treating your pet with baby carrots, cubed zucchini or green beans - raw or frozen even! Or use just a few pieces of your pet's dry food as treats. Supplementing your pet's diet with vegetables is another great way to help them feel fuller longer between meals; adding carrots, green beans or plain canned pumpkin (no spices!) to your pet's diet will add extra fiber for satiety, without adding extra calories.

Nutrition is just one key component for optimal health care for your pet. Talk with your veterinarian regularly about your pet's diet. Feeding your pet properly and keeping your pet at a healthy weight are vital to ensuring you and your pets enjoy a long and happy life together!



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