

Nutritional Assessment Is an Iterative Process: Extended Evaluation



An extended nutritional evaluation is indicated when the screening assessment and physical examination identify the presence of one or more nutritional risk factors, such as a medical condition, an abnormal body condition or muscle condition score, or an unconventional diet (e.g., home-cooked or raw diet). These factors suggest nutrition may play an important role in a pet's health or in the management of a health condition.

Key Messages

- An extended evaluation typically entails getting and evaluating additional information about the pet, the diet, feeding practices and home environment. Obtaining this information can provide valuable insights.
- **Additional animal-related factors to assess**
 - A pet's food intake or behavior, including any changes (e.g., amount eaten, eating behaviors, chewing habits, swallowing, nausea, vomiting, regurgitation)
 - The pet's activity (e.g., type of activity, how much, any changes)
 - Condition of the skin and hair coat (e.g., easily plucked hair, dry or scaly skin, thin skin)
 - Diagnostic test results (e.g., serum chemistry profile, complete blood count, urinalysis, fecal exam, radiographs)
 - Presence of new or ongoing medical conditions (e.g., thyroid disease, chronic renal disease) and medications
- **Other diet-related factors to consider**
 - Appropriateness of the current pet food's caloric density and nutritional content
 - How and where pet food is stored
 - The specific recipe, ingredients, preparation, storage or substitutions associated with home-cooked diets or raw diets
 - Caloric content of treats and other foods
 - How water is provided to the pet (e.g., bowl, frequency of water change)
- **Feeding management or practices to evaluate**
 - Number of people in the home who feed the pet
 - Other pets in the household and potential issues (e.g., competition for food)
 - Feeding strategies in multi-pet households (e.g., shared or separate bowls, automatic or microchip feeder use)
 - How food is offered (e.g., bowl feeding, puzzle feeders, food/treat toys, automatic feeders, microchip feeders)

■ Environmental factors to assess

- Presence of potential environmental stressors (e.g., recent move, conflict over resources, recent changes in the home, outdoor stimuli)
 - Environmental enrichment activities
 - Where the pet is housed and, if kept outside, what surfaces are present
- Once additional information has been gathered and analyzed, create an action plan and make a nutritional recommendation. The recommendation should include the pet's main food, treats, feeding method, frequency and location. Whether or not changes are needed, document the specific recommendation in the pet's medical record along with the owner's response.

Additional Resource

Freeman, L., Becvarova, I., Cave, N., MacKay, C., Nguyen, P., Rama, B., Takashima, G., Tiffin, R., Tsjimoto, H., & van Beukelen, P. (2011). WSAVA nutritional assessment guidelines. *Journal of Small Animal Practice*, 52(7), 385–396. doi: 10.1111/j.1748-5827.2011.01079.x

The Purina Institute aims to help put nutrition at the forefront of pet health discussions by providing user-friendly, science-based information that helps pets live longer, healthier lives.

