

PET TALK

THREE NOTCH VETERINARY HOSPITAL
PARK VETERINARY CLINIC

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CAT NUTRITION



Unbeknown to many cat owners, recommendations for cat nutrition have changed dramatically over the last 5 years. Most cats are fed mostly, if not only, dry kibble. However, we now know that canned food is a much better choice for felines. This article will focus on three important issues regarding the positive aspects of canned food and outline the benefits of canned diets.



1. Cats, unlike dogs or humans, are obligate carnivores. They have evolved to thrive on animal based protein. Plant based protein is more difficult for cats to metabolize. Cats lack specific enzymes, that omnivores carry, which make it possible to efficiently absorb plant based proteins. Dry food tends to be higher in plant based protein while canned food is higher in animal based. This makes the quality of the protein source superior in canned food. Dry food is cooked at higher temperatures than canned food and this further degrades the value of its protein content.

2. Cats evolved by surviving on diets consisting mainly of rodents and birds. This natural diet is high in protein and fat and low in carbohydrates. Dry kibble is high in carbs, much higher than a cats natural diet would provide. We know now that cats have multiple healthy issues that are related to high carb diets. The two most common are obesity and diabetes. Cats primarily utilize protein and fat for their energy needs. It has been estimated that in the wild carbs account for 3-5 % of a felines caloric diet. A cat eating dry kibble receives 35-50% of their calories from carbs. So, all these extra carb calories are being stored as fat.



Diabetes is a complex disease with varying initiating factors. Over the last 5-10 years, research on feline diabetes has shown that when a diabetic cats' diet is changed from a high carb dry food to a high protein high fat canned food, their need for insulin decreases. In some cases, the need for insulin ceases and the cats can be maintained on an all canned diet. Does this mean that the dry kibble diet caused diabetes? Again, diabetes is too complex of a disease to single out only one initiating factor, but if a high carb diet contributes to the development of diabetes, then it is a factor that is controllable.

When reading nutrition labels don't be fooled when it appears that dry food has a higher overall protein percentage.



When protein in dry food is compared to canned on a dry matter basis, the canned food will always have a higher protein level as well as a better quality source of protein.

3. An all dry diet decreases the overall water consumption of cats. It may appear that cats who eat an all dry diet drink a lot of water, but cats on a canned food diet, which contains 75% water, will consume more. It has been estimated that a cat on a dry diet will consume half the amount of water that a cat eating a canned diet. Why is water intake so important? Two common illnesses in cats are closely associated with a cat's water consumption; chronic kidney disease and cystitis (or inflammation of the bladder wall).

Chronic kidney disease is a leading cause of death in felines. Since we now know that cats on a dry diet won't consume as much water as cats on canned food, it's

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APVES, our partner emer-
gency facility., located in :**

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Special points of interest:

- * **Lack of water consumption can cause Kidney disease and cystitis.**
- * **Canned food increases hydration.**
- * **A diet of all dry food causes decrease in water consumption.**

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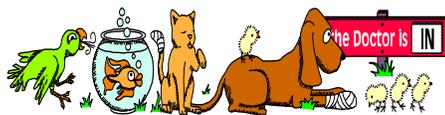
Three Notch Veterinary Hospital and Park Veterinary Clinic provide after hours emergency services through our partner emergency service, Allied Partner Veterinary Emergency Services.

APVES is located just north of Prince Frederick, Maryland in Huntingtown. APVES has emergency hours weekdays: 6PM-8AM, weekends and holidays: 24 hours.

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410.535.9722**

To learn more about APVES visit their website

www.vetmash.com/APVES



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possible that lifelong subclinical dehydration may be a factor in the development of kidney insufficiency.

Cystitis is an extremely common problem in cats. Clinical signs include blood in the urine, straining to urinate and urinating in inappropriate areas in the house. There are many inciting causes including infections, crystals, bladder stones, and tumors. For cats, the most common cause is a condition called feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC). FIC is an inflammation of the bladder wall where an obvious inciting cause is not found. Currently, it is generally believed three factors are involved, either singularly or in combination, in FIC. They include environmental stress, defective mucous lining of the bladder wall and high urinary specific gravity (this is due to extremely concentrated urine). We find that cats who are fed an all dry diet have very high specific gravities and this concentrated urine irritates the bladder resulting in cystitis. When switched to a canned diet, the urine becomes less concentrated and chronic cystitis events resolve.

Hopefully, this article helps explain the benefits of a canned diet. If you own a cat who has been diagnosed with any of the conditions discussed and is currently eating only dry food, it would be beneficial to try switching him/her to a canned diet. For other owners who haven't had to deal with these medical issues, considering a switch now may prevent future problems from occurring.

Author
Jennifer O'Connor, DVM



"A DIFFERENT SORT OF SUMMER TRIP"



Summer is the time most of us go on vacation trips. This summer, Dr. Langford is going on a very different sort of trip. He is going to Nicaragua as

part of an organization called the Christian Veterinary Mission. This organization works all over the world encouraging and equipping veterinarians and veterinary technicians to go to third world countries to help the people there with their animals.

His trip will be to a remote area of Nicaragua the first week of August, to help the people there with primarily their cattle and horses.

Nicaragua is the poorest country in Central America, and there is a great need for veterinarians and veterinary technicians to help the people learn about the proper husbandry practices and basic veterinary care for their animals.

If you would like to know more about this organization or his trip, visit:

www.cvmusa.org

If you have a desire to support this organization or Dr. Langford's trip, please go to:

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You can make a general donation, or specify it for Dr. Langford's trip.

If you have any interest in this organization or his mission trip, you may write to him at:

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GROUP DOG CLASS OR PRIVATE LESSONS; WHAT'S RIGHT FOR ME?

In this edition of Obedience Corner, we're going to talk about dog classes and private lessons and which one is better. The answer to this question is really based on the individual dog and his people. To be fair, not every owner needs the help of a professional trainer, because some are good trainers in their own right. That said, even accomplished owner-trainers can learn new techniques and ideas and have fun at the same time. Dog classes and private lessons both have advantages and disadvantages. The trick is to know what they are and make a smart decision before you go down the wrong path.



We'll go through the pros and cons of group classes first. The biggest advantage of classes is that they are a good way for the "typical" dog to meet new dogs and people and gain some socialization. It's also a good way for owners to learn from each other and network. ("Networking" is a fancy term for "play dates"!)

Be aware that a "typical dog" means a dog that is reasonably friendly and can tolerate people and other dogs pretty well. While some folks may not view this as a positive, classes are scheduled and paid for in advance so it's harder to back out when things get busy. If you are a procrastinator and need motivation, classes are a good idea. By the hour, classes are less expensive than private lessons.

Those were the advantages. Here are some drawbacks about classes. Since they are scheduled in advance, missing a class is more difficult to make up (though good trainers should work with you). Classes can be noisy and stressful for dogs (and families) that are sensitive and are not appropriate for fearful, aggressive, or anxious dogs. Many people believe that their nervous or hyper dog just needs training and socialization. Although training may help, helping dogs become

more confident or tolerant of stressful situations takes more than simple commands and should be done carefully. Otherwise, you'll do no good or make it worse. If you were afraid of the water and someone threw you in the deep end of the pool, it wouldn't help, would it? Classes are also structured so there's less time for one-on-one attention given to individual issues. Although classes can be less expensive, the quality of the instruction can vary widely based on class size, composition, and the experience and credentials of the trainer.



So what are the advantages of private lessons? The biggest benefit is the ability to work on issues specific to your dog and household in a familiar environment.

This is ideal for dogs that are fearful, aggressive, or otherwise nervous because when we train and teach, we want the dog and owner to be as calm and comfortable as possible. It's common sense that if both dog and owner are stressed out, neither one is going to learn much or enjoy the training process. Another benefit is that a private lesson agenda is tailored to your unique needs so there's no time wasted with stuff you're not interested in. Private lessons are also great for "tune ups" or to get help with one or two issues that can be covered in one meeting. If you only need help getting your dog to come, you may not need a full 8 week class. Many times, behavioral issues are of greatest interest to a family who needed focused work. Private lessons are also good when the whole family wants to work and learn. Families are encouraged to come to most group classes too, but there's typically not enough time for the whole family to practice and learn one-on-one. Private lessons are scheduled at your convenience and are typically pay as you go. They can also be held anywhere that training or socialization is needed. As an example, I've met people at parks, playgrounds, and have worked at different areas in their neighborhoods.

So that's the good. What's not so good? The biggest disadvantage I see is that, often, after a single lesson, I never hear from people again. They think "I got it" but may not have all the tools they need to move forward on their own. Unlike a class with weeks of homework, private lessons require more self-discipline because there's no set schedule and guide to help you along. Based on the amount of lessons required, meeting privately can sometimes be more expensive than group classes. Lastly, private lessons are not quite as social an event as group lessons. This offers less opportunity to learn from others. For many private lessons, you also miss out on the socialization of your dog with other dogs. Personally, I address this by working my dogs into the lesson plan. I'm very fortunate that my dogs are great teachers themselves, but not all trainers do this.



I hope this discussion provides some guidance and some ideas to help you choose between group obedience classes and private lessons. As always, if you have any questions, contact your favorite veterinarian or local trainer.

Good Luck and Happy Training!



Brian Markowich, CPDT
Author, Editor, & Trainer