

**Nutritional Assessment**

# NUTRITION-RELATED RISK FACTORS

Many factors, which may be associated with the specific pet, diet, feeding practices and environment, can influence a pet's nutritional status. These factors are typically identified during the medical history and physical examination.

Certain factors may not require an extended evaluation if the pet is otherwise healthy. However, their presence does invite veterinary health care professionals to look more closely. The specific risk factors known to impact a pet's nutritional status are listed below. The greater the number of risk factors identified during the screening evaluation, the more important an extended evaluation and tailored nutrition plan becomes for the patient.

**Key Messages****Nutritional screening risk factors for which an extended evaluation is OPTIONAL**

- Extremely low or high activity level with normal body condition score
- Multiple pets in the home
- Gestation
- Lactation
- Growing
- Age  $\geq$  7 years

**Nutritional screening risk factors for which an extended evaluation is NEEDED**

- History of altered gastrointestinal function
- Ongoing medical conditions/disease
- Currently receiving medications and/or dietary supplements
- Unconventional diet (e.g., raw, homemade, vegetarian, unfamiliar)
- Snacks, treats, table food > 10% of total daily calories
- Inadequate or inappropriate housing

**Physical examination findings that indicate an extended evaluation is NEEDED**

- Body condition score less than 4 or greater than 6 on a 9-point scale
- Muscle wasting based on muscle condition score
- Unexplained weight change
- Dental abnormalities or disease
- Poor skin or hair coat
- New medical conditions

**Additional Resources**

Baldwin, K., Bartges, J., Buffington, T., Freeman, L. M., Grabow, M., Legred, J., & Ostwald, D., Jr. (2010). AAHA nutritional assessment guidelines for dogs and cats. *Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association*, 46(4), 285–296. doi: 10.5326/0460285

WSAVA Nutritional Assessment Guidelines Task Force Members, Freeman, L., Becvarova, I., Cave, N., MacKay, C., Nguyen, P., Rama, B., Takashima, G., Tiffin, R., Tsujimoto, 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

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