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**Pet Food at Center Stage in UVSA Veterinary Industry Insights Survey**

ABINGDON, MD (SEPTEMBER 25, 2019) The top healthcare questions of dog and cat owners are about pet foods and nutrition, the focus of the most recent *Industry Insight Survey* commissioned by the United Veterinary Services Association (UVSA). This survey of 2,000 U.S. dog or cat owners, with highlight findings, were presented at the KC (Kansas City) Animal Health Corridor August 2019 Market Insight Seminar, found that that 58% of dog owners and 48% of cat owners have discussed the pet foods they use with their veterinarian.

At the same time, 61% of dog owners and 49% of cat owners have changed pet food brands within the previous 12 months. Among dog owners, top motivations for changing products were switching to a higher-quality brand (29%), a discussion with their veterinarian (23%), and addressing specific pet health concerns--along with having the dog stop liking/eating the pet food being used. Patterns are similar among cat owners, with 29% switching to a higher-quality brand and 18% making a change after a discussion with the vet.

What characteristics do today's consumers associate with healthier pet food? Among dog and cat owners, 41% strongly agree that less processed pet foods are healthier, and 34% strongly agree that those made from whole foods are healthier, compared with 27% strongly agreeing that they seek out pet foods based on information provided by their veterinarians.

Moreover, three-fourths of dog or cat owners somewhat or strongly agree that they are willing to pay more for pet foods that are healthier. Pet owner willingness to spend on healthier pet foods can therefore be an important source of revenue for veterinary practices. The UVSA survey found that among the 10% of dog or cat owners who buy pet food through their veterinarian, nearly half (46%) of dog owners spend \$50 or more monthly on dog food (compared with only a third of dog owners overall), and 37% of cat owners spend \$50 or more monthly on cat food (compared with a fourth of cat owners overall). More importantly, providing pet owners with guidance on choosing pet food can keep veterinarians top-of-mind when it comes to everyday consumer questions about caring for pets.

In guiding their clients, veterinarians can also help bridge the gap between pet owner perceptions and medical statistics on the issue of pet obesity, a significant concern among the pet dog and cat population in the U.S., as it is among the human population of pet owners. As in the human population, moreover, acknowledging the problem is a big part of tackling the issue. Although the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) reports that 56% of pet dogs and 60% of pet cats are overweight or obese, the UVSA *Industry Insights Survey* found that only 24% of dog owners and 30% of cat owners acknowledge having a pet that is somewhat or very overweight. Even among those who acknowledge having overweight or obese pets, only about three-fourths of dog owners and two-thirds of cat owners have specifically discussed this issue with their veterinarian.



With the veterinary sector being reshaped by e-commerce, corporatization, and other competitive forces, the veterinary profession as a whole is re-assessing best practices and the most effective ways to adapt to a fast-changing pet retailing, pet services, and pet care information landscape. Providing guidance to clients on feeding (and not overfeeding) their pets, and on optimal pet food and pet treat choices, is likely to play an important role in updating the role of today's pet vets.

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**About UVSA-** The mission of the United Veterinary Services Association (UVSA) is to be the hub for relevant information leading to innovation in the animal health care supply chain. UVSA members are distributors, manufacturers and suppliers of animal health products serving veterinarians and animal health clinics. The primary market for veterinary supplies consists of some 60,000 veterinarians practicing in approximately 25,000 animal health clinics throughout the United States and includes companion animal, equine, food animal and specialty practices.

**UVSA** will fulfill its mission by designing programs and services that will help distributors, manufacturers and suppliers remain relevant in the veterinary supply chain through a three-pronged approach focusing on:

- Promotion of Supply Chain Optimization.
- Providing a voice for the industry that includes collaboration with allied industry associations related to compliance and regulatory issues of concern to the animal health supply channel.
- Providing Industry Insights through research on emerging markets, customer needs, wholesaler and supply chain benchmarks and consumer expectations.

For more information, go to [www.uvsa.net](http://www.uvsa.net).