

Food sabotage!

Make sure clients don't derail the benefits of veterinary therapeutic diets.

By Mindy Valcarcel, Medicine Channel Director

As you know, therapeutic diets for your veterinary patients have been designed and, in many cases, clinically tested to aid in the health of a pet facing a clinical issue, whether related to weight, allergies, urinary health or any of the other conditions nutritional factors have been found to improve. But your clients may not be aware of potential imbalances

they are throwing into the plan when they add to this diet.

"Some therapeutic diets are designed to be effective if nothing else passes the pet's lips," said Deborah Linder, DVM, DACVN, in her Fetch dvm360 conference

session "Do I need a therapeutic food? A nutritionist's approach to selecting diets in disease." Dr. Linder, head of the Tufts Obesity Clinic for Animals Clinical Nutrition Service, said if you add in treats and enticements, the efficacy could wane, pending the treats given and the disease being managed. (She advised to especially watch the diets for urinary stones!)

This leads back to the importance of obtaining a complete diet history. Clients might say, "I feed Food X," when asked and leave it at that. Probe further. "And" is the most important word we can use in a diet history," Dr. Linder said. She advised to keep asking "And?" until clients have exhausted the things they feed their pets. You may also need to ask targeted questions

as Dr. Linder commonly sees clients overlook items such as dental treats, especially rawhides, and food given with medication.



A side helping of advice: While collecting that diet history, does your face give away a hint of your impression of the diet clients are feeding? Dr. Linder communicated a healthy attitude you might adopt: "I don't say that there are good or bad foods, just foods I have more information on." Similarly, Dr. Linder said, "There aren't good or bad food companies. Some just do testing on their diets more so we can feel more comfortable knowing the expected outcomes and recommending them."

