WSAVA Global Nutrition Committee Reports Growing Interest in The Importance of Diet from Veterinarians Globally

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) Global Nutrition Committee (GNC) has highlighted a growing interest in the importance of nutrition in optimum pet health and confirmed its commitment to continue to campaign for a nutritional assessment to be included in every veterinary visit. It is also calling on veterinary schools to include more training on clinical nutrition.

The GNC aims to enhance awareness of the importance of nutrition and to advance the central role of veterinarians and veterinary nurses as the expert source of information to pet owners. Co-Chaired by Dr Gregg Takashima, owner of a veterinary hospital in Oregon, USA and Dr Marge Chandler, a consultant in veterinary nutrition and medicine based in Scotland, the GNC has created a set of Nutritional Assessment Guidelines, available in ten languages, published in 17 publications and endorsed by 31 organizations. It has also created a Nutrition Toolkit which contains a range of resources for free download and use in practice.

During 2016, GNC members presented and published articles on aspects of clinical nutrition around the world. The Committee also participated in a One Health Symposium on Obesity in Humans and Companion Animals hosted by the WSAVA One Health Committee and the US Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, in November 2016.

Commenting on the GNC’s achievements and plans for 2017, GNC Co-Chair Dr Marge Chandler said: “Based on its importance to overall health, we continue to remind
veterinarians that a nutritional assessment should be the fifth vital assessment in a standard physical examination and that the veterinary healthcare team should provide nutritional recommendations for each animal as an integral component of patient care.”

She added: “The role of nutrition in optimum health and in alleviating the impact of disease is increasingly recognized yet, while there are excellent nutrition programs in some veterinary schools, many still struggle to offer sufficient training in small animal nutrition. As veterinarians and students continue demand more knowledge and, as owners expect more information from their veterinarians, we expect the situation to improve and are already working with some schools to facilitate this.”

Co-Chair Dr Takashima added: “Research shows that more than 90% of pet owners would like nutritional advice yet fewer than 15% feel they receive it. In some parts of the world, pet malnutrition remains a major challenge, while in many other countries, pet obesity is an increasing problem. The GNC Global Guidelines and Nutrition Toolkit help the veterinary healthcare team to address nutrition at every patient visit and to counter inaccurate and misleading information available online. We are delighted that our resources are now so widely used within the profession and that they are one of the most frequently downloaded resources on the WSAVA website.

“We are finalizing another ambitious program of presentations and publications for 2017 to ensure clinical nutrition remains high on the profession’s agenda and to support veterinarians in providing the right solution for their patients. We are grateful for the support and encouragement we receive from our sponsors, Hill’s Pet Nutrition, Purina and Royal Canin. We couldn’t do it without them!”

The WSAVA works to enhance the clinical care of companion animals globally, representing around 200,000 veterinarians around the world through 101 member associations. Its core activities include the creation of Global Guidelines which set standards for veterinary care and providing continuing education (CE) and other
educational resources for its members, particularly those in which companion animal veterinary care is still emerging.

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