



Nutrition Communication Activity (Instructor's Guide)

Time: 40 minutes

Group Size: 3

Materials Needed: Computer/projector

INSTRUCTIONS:

Display a list of communication skills appropriate for your curriculum on the screen so students may reference it during the activity. A skill that can be introduced here is the “tell back” or “ask-tell-ask” skill. You may alter this activity as needed, depending on your classroom setup. For more information about how you can set up your classroom, refer to Module 1: Client Communication Activity Instructor's Guide.

Before beginning, remind students that they have only a limited amount of time for each discussion. Therefore, they should first decide what key points they would like to talk about in their short time.

1. Student A will start as the veterinary expert. Student B will be the client. Student C will be the observer.
2. The students will hold a conversation focusing on the communication skills appropriate for your curriculum. Student A should take a short nutritional history and solicit concerns or questions from Student B. Student A should then make an informed nutritional recommendation to Student B.
3. After a short time, stop the conversations to enter the feedback phase of the activity. The observer in each group will provide feedback to the students on their communication skills.
4. The students should then rotate roles, and initiate a second conversation.
5. After a short time, stop the conversations and begin feedback. The observer in each group will provide feedback to the students on their communication skills.
6. Rotate once again, as time permits.
7. Facilitate a discussion to debrief (10 minutes)
 - a. What communication skills worked well during your conversation?
 - b. What communication skills did you find difficult to use?
 - c. In regards to non-verbal skills, what felt comfortable for you? What felt uncomfortable? How have you seen these used in veterinary practices?
 - d. What challenges did you face in making a nutritional recommendation?

SCENARIO 1 - DVM ROLE

Client: Mr. or Ms. Humphrey

Patient: 8-year-old spayed female Labrador Retriever named Valentine

Chief Complaint: Wellness exam

Case Objective: Obtain a nutritional history



SCENARIO 1 - CLIENT ROLE

Client: Mr. or Ms. Humphrey

Patient: 8-year-old spayed female Labrador Retriever named Valentine

Chief Complaint: Wellness exam

History: You have had Valentine since she was a puppy, and she is your only dog. She has been healthy all her life, and her only surgical procedure was when she was spayed as a puppy. You are bringing her in today for her annual wellness visit because you “got the postcard in the mail.” Valentine is due for routine vaccinations and is on parasite preventives.

Key Nutritional History Points:

1. Valentine loves to eat, and you love to feed her. It makes you happy to see her happy.
2. You do not know the name of the diet Valentine eats. It is a brown bag from the local pet store, and the food has “fun shapes and colors.”
3. You feed Valentine 2 cups twice per day. If the DVM asks to quantify the cups, you can describe them as something you picked up from a sporting event (e.g., soccer, basketball). They are about 700 mL (24 oz). Only reveal this information if directly asked about the size of the cups.
4. You occasionally give Valentine treats and some food from your plate at dinner. You may adlib what you feed her. Only reveal this information if directly asked, preferably more than once.
5. Overall, you know that Valentine has probably gained a few pounds but you are not concerned. She seems happy and has not had any health problems. You are not reluctant to have a conversation about her weight, but are also not eager to do so.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Communication Skills:

- Nonverbal skills
- Open-ended inquiries
- Reflective listening
- Empathy

Case Learning Points (correspond to Key Nutritional History Points):

1. Feeding and obesity have a link to the human-animal bond. Many clients enjoy making their pets happy, and feeding is one way to achieve this.
2. There will possibly be a communicative misalignment between the DVM and client, where the client focuses on the characteristics (shape and color) of the food, rather than the brand or nutritional content.
3. The client feeds the dog a total of “four cups” per day. In this case a “cup” is actually a large 700 mL (24 oz) cup, as from a sporting event.
4. The manner in which the DVM asks a history question can influence the answer provided by the client.
5. Obesity is a medical issue with a number of significant possible sequelae, and should not be ignored during wellness visits.

Suggested Readings:

Kealy, R. D., Lawler, D. F., Ballam, J. M., Mantz, S. L., Biery, D. N., Greeley, E. H., ... & Stowe, H. D. (2002). Effects of diet restriction on life span and age-related changes in dogs. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 220(9), 1315-1320.

MacMartin, C., Wheat, H. C., Coe, J. B., & Adams, C. L. (2015). Effect of question design on dietary information solicited during veterinarian-client interactions in companion animal practice in Ontario, Canada. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 246(11), 1203-1214.

Phillips, A. M., Coe, J. B., Rock, M. J., & Adams, C. L. (2017). Feline Obesity in Veterinary Medicine: insights from a Thematic analysis of communication in Practice. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 4, 117

SCENARIO 2 - DVM ROLE

Client: Mr. or Ms. McCombs

Patient: 5-year-old spayed female miniature Pinscher named Rosie

Chief Complaint: Wellness exam

Case Objective: Obtain a nutritional history. Make a recommendation.



SCENARIO 2 - CLIENT ROLE

Client: Mr. or Ms. McCombs

Patient: 5-year-old spayed female miniature Pinscher named Rosie

Chief Complaint: Wellness exam

History: You adopted Rosie two years ago, and she lives with a cat but no other dogs. She has been healthy since you adopted her, and her only surgical procedure that you know of was when she was spayed as a puppy. You are bringing her in today for her annual wellness visit. Rosie is due for routine vaccinations and is on parasite preventives.

Key Nutritional History Points:

1. Rosie's diet is a premium adult brand that you obtain at the pet store. Feel free to adlib which brand.
2. You feed Rosie the amount that it states on the back of the bag, and you are very strict about not giving her extra. You do not give Rosie any treats.
3. You have two young children and they give Rosie snacks at dinner. Rosie also eats any food that falls to the floor during a meal.
4. You are concerned about Rosie's weight gain, and would like to do something to resolve the issue. However, your children are too young to understand that feeding the dog their food is unhealthy.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Communication Skills:

- Nonverbal skills
- Open-ended inquiries
- Reflective listening
- Empathy
- Ask-Tell-Ask (Tell-Back)
- Chunk & Check

Case Learning Points (correspond to Key Nutritional History Points):

In this case the DVM is being asked to help a client who is willing to adhere to recommendations, but faces external factors (young children) that make it difficult to reduce calorie intake. The DVM might consider alternative approaches to weight loss (e.g., increased exercise, placing the patient in a crate during family meals, reducing the patient's dietary intake to offset the additional calories).

Suggested Readings:

Kealy, R. D., Lawler, D. F., Ballam, J. M., Mantz, S. L., Biery, D. N., Greeley, E. H., ... & Stowe, H. D. (2002). Effects of diet restriction on life span and age-related changes in dogs. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 220(9), 1315-1320.

MacMartin, C., Wheat, H. C., Coe, J. B., & Adams, C. L. (2015). Effect of question design on dietary information solicited during veterinarian-client interactions in companion animal practice in Ontario, Canada. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 246(11), 1203-1214.

Phillips, A. M., Coe, J. B., Rock, M. J., & Adams, C. L. (2017). Feline Obesity in Veterinary Medicine: insights from a Thematic analysis of communication in Practice. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 4, 117

SCENARIO 3 - DVM ROLE

Client: Mr. or Ms. Alexander

Patient: 3-year-old castrated male DSH named Simba

Chief Complaint: Wellness exam

Case Objective: Obtain a nutritional history. Discuss food selection / food labels.



SCENARIO 3 - CLIENT ROLE

Client: Mr. or Ms. Alexander

Patient: 3-year-old castrated male DSH named Simba

Chief Complaint: Wellness exam

History: You have had Simba since he was a kitten, and he is your only cat. He has been healthy all his life, and his only surgical procedure was when he was castrated as a kitten. You are bringing him in today for his annual wellness visit. Simba is due for routine vaccinations and is on parasite preventives.

Key Nutritional History Points:

1. You do not know the name of the diet Simba eats. It is a bit pricey and you obtain it from the local pet store. You chose this food because you saw advertisements for it on your social media, which espouse the benefits of feeding an “organic and natural” diet.
2. You fill the bowl up when it gets empty, and Simba seems to eat the amount he needs. You do not feed any treats or food from the table.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Communication Skills:

- Nonverbal skills
- Open-ended inquiries
- Reflective listening
- Empathy
- Ask-Tell-Ask (Tell-Back)
- Chunk & Check

Case Learning Points (correspond to Key Nutritional History Points):

There will possibly be a communicative misalignment between the DVM and client, where the client focuses on the characteristics of the food (organic and natural), rather than the brand or nutritional content.

Suggested Readings:

Kealy, R. D., Lawler, D. F., Ballam, J. M., Mantz, S. L., Biery, D. N., Greeley, E. H., ... & Stowe, H. D. (2002). Effects of diet restriction on life span and age-related changes in dogs. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 220(9), 1315-1320.

MacMartin, C., Wheat, H. C., Coe, J. B., & Adams, C. L. (2015). Effect of question design on dietary information solicited during veterinarian-client interactions in companion animal practice in Ontario, Canada. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 246(11), 1203-1214.

Phillips, A. M., Coe, J. B., Rock, M. J., & Adams, C. L. (2017). Feline Obesity in Veterinary Medicine: insights from a Thematic analysis of communication in Practice. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 4, 117