

5 Tips for Using Diet to Manage Gastrointestinal and Dermatologic Conditions

Nutrition is an important aspect of canine and feline gastrointestinal (GI) and dermatologic conditions, but if the pet has concurrent issues, addressing the problems can be difficult. Catherine Ruggiero, MS, DVM, DACVIM (Nutrition) offers five tips to help manage these conditions from a nutritional perspective.

1. Choose the right diet based on the patient's needs

When treating pets with GI and dermatologic conditions, veterinarians have several options:

- Highly digestible (i.e., low-residue) diets
- Low-fat diets
- Novel or hydrolyzed protein
- Fiber-enhanced diets

2. Consider fiber sources (prebiotics)

Including high-quality prebiotics in the pet's therapeutic diet plan can benefit their skin and GI tract. Specially formulated prebiotics, such as Hill's ActivBiome+ Technology, can activate the gut microbiome, which releases gut-nourishing compounds to support gut bacteria and overall health.

3. Use a multimodal treatment approach

Chronic GI and dermatologic conditions are not curable and require long-term management. Nutrition alone may not completely address some conditions, and additional therapies are often necessary. Veterinarians must find the appropriate combination of medications, topical treatments, immunotherapy, and nutrition to manage the pet's condition.

4. Perform a strict elimination diet trial

Elimination diet trials are important in many cases to help diagnose a food allergy as the cause of dermatologic and/or GI signs. During this diagnostic phase, the pet should receive no unsanctioned food, such as table scraps, flavored chewable medications, or treats.

5. Communicate with your clients

Adherence is critical to properly manage these conditions and requires excellent client communication. Ensure your clients understand that their pet's condition will require life-long treatment and a potentially prolonged diagnostic process. In addition, warn them about potential flare-ups, so they don't become frustrated when the treatment plan suddenly seems less effective.



For more information, scan the QR code and keep an eye out for the upcoming Vet2Vet discussion between Dr. Catherine Ruggiero, MS, DVM, DACVIM (Nutrition) and Cassi Fleming, MS, DVM, sponsored by Hill's Pet Nutrition.



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