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Does this chart make me look fat?

Yes, price and income affect the demand for veterinary services. But in the case of nutrition, education may be just as important.

Clients are much more likely to understand their pet's weight condition if you provide a visual without labels. Consider this: In 2012, the AVMA's Pet Owner Demographics survey (PDS) asked:

Is your pet thin, ideal, overweight or obese?

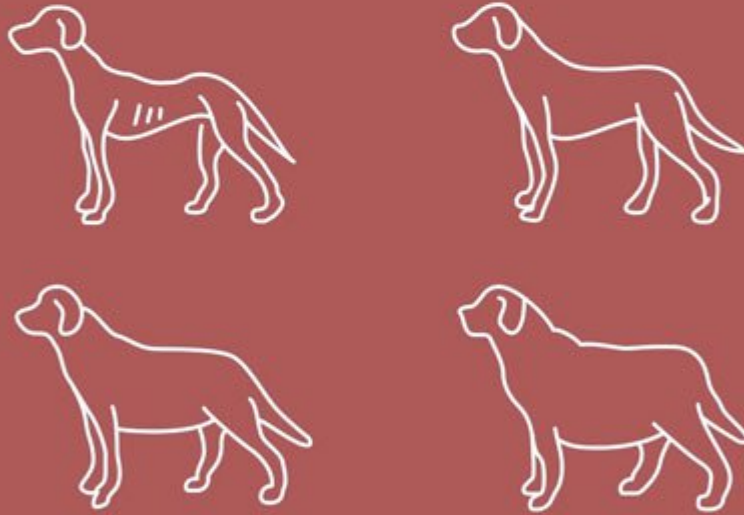
86%
said their pet was ideal.

When they viewed a body condition picture and word descriptor (thin, ideal, overweight, obese) in a test sample,

73%
indicated their pet's weight was ideal.

Fast forward to the 2017 PDS. Respondents were shown only body condition pictures without the labels. Then they were asked:

Is your pet thin, ideal, overweight or obese?



only **51%** of dog owners
 said they thought their pet was an ideal weight—
 much closer to the **44%** of pets
 that are an ideal weight,
 according to the 2016 American Pet Obesity
 Prevention survey.

What does this mean?

A substantial number of dog owners don't know what an ideal weight looks like in their pet, suggesting a need for greater educational effort on pet nutrition and the health problems associated with being overweight.

The new PDS received responses from more than 50,000 households nationwide to estimate the number of pet-owning households, the type and number of pets owned per pet-owning household, and the amount of veterinary service expenditures. Additionally, the PDS sought to collect more specific information on the types of veterinary services purchased and where those services were purchased.

According to the 2017 AVMA Pet Owner Demographics survey, clients are much more likely to understand their pet's weight condition if you provide a visual without labels.



Mine the gap

The results of the AVMA’s 2017 PDS provide further support to the idea that veterinarians have a huge opportunity to improve animal healthcare outcomes while increasing their income potential. Over the course of the next year, the AVMA Veterinary Economics Division will focus research and outreach efforts on understanding the factors that affect the demand for veterinary services and on developing actions that veterinary practices can use to improve that demand.

While the number of pet-owning households is rising and the human-animal bond in these households continues to move towards the pet being a family member, the total output of veterinary services is not keeping pace and the number of pets per veterinarian is declining (though it has improved). These trends indicate a need for the profession to seek to both expand and improve the delivery of veterinary services.

Where else are you gapping out?

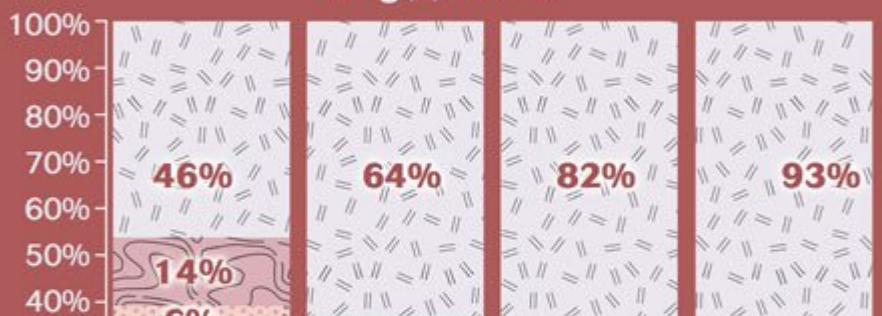
Preliminary results from the 2017 PDS show that a large percentage of pets (dogs, cats, horses, birds and others) either aren’t receiving healthcare that meets practice guidelines, or they are receiving it but not from a veterinary practice.

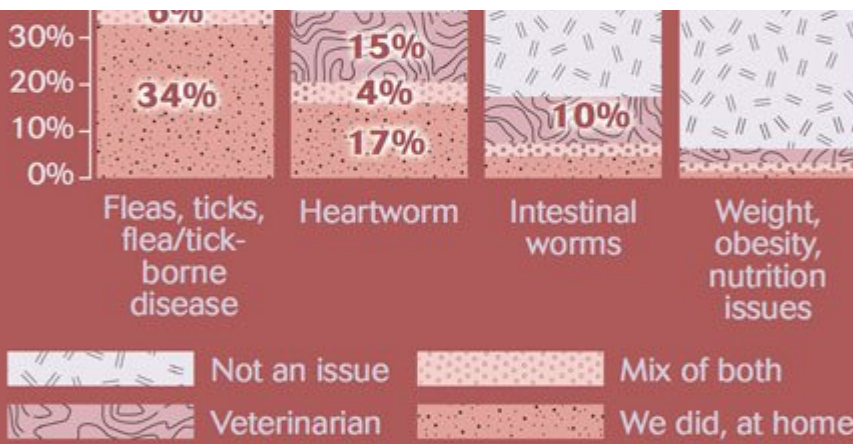
According to AAHA standards, the amount of care that a 12-year-old dog needs over the course of its lifetime is five times greater than the care that is actually provided by the average veterinary practice. Read more on this topic at dvm360.com/AAHAgap.

Dog-owning household respondents to the PDS provided information on where they received preventive care for their dog(s). Most households indicated that preventive care was not an issue, while a very small percentage (between 1 percent and 15 percent) received the preventive treatment from the veterinarian (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1:

Who gave preventive care or treated your dog(s) for ...





Similar results were seen with horse-owning households.

Figure 2:

Who gave preventive care or treated your horse(s) for ...



The 2017 PDS will be available in early 2018, and a summary of the findings will be provided at the 2017 AVMA Economic Summit in Schaumburg, Illinois, October 21-22.



Dr. Michael Dicks is director of the



AVMA's 2017 PDS shows that veterinarians have a huge opportunity to improve healthcare outcomes while increasing their bottom line as a large percentage of pets (dogs, cats, horses, birds, etc.) either aren't receiving healthcare that meets practice guidelines or they are receiving it but not from a veterinary practice.

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