

Mary Kate Lynch RVN reviews a recent Hills CVE event

# Golden nuggets at Hill's nutrition road show

*Hill's Pet Nutrition held a road show in October in Dublin. Some 85 people attended the CPD programme on puppy and kitten health. This event was well organised and attracted a large, cross section of the veterinary community from right across Ireland*

Veterinary surgeons, nurses and lay practice staff all attended and the presentations were geared to be informative, educational and imparted some golden nuggets of information.

It provided a great opportunity to socialise and interact with our colleagues and friends and to renew old acquaintances.

The large attendance at the event also emphasised the huge role nutrition plays in animal health and wellbeing.

Fi Marjora, a VN education specialist at Hills Pet Nutrition, started off the event with 'The Importance of the Right Nutrition.' This was a great opportunity for revision as it went through why bitches and queens need puppy/kitten food when pregnant and lactating and why large breed puppies need a different diet to small breed puppies, plus the reasons obese juveniles are more prone to becoming obese adults.

There are five main elements why puppies and kittens need a good balanced diet.

These are:

- For healthy growth and development;
- To maintain a strong immune system;
- For a healthy digestive system;
- To have a vital and alert behaviour; and,
- For a lustrous coat.

Fi also went through the importance of proteins, energy and calcium in maintaining the right growth levels especially in large breed puppies. As we all know, an excess of calcium can cause abnormal skeletal development during their growth period.

Sarah Whitehead, who is the owner of 'Clever Dog Company' in England and an international lecturer on animal behaviour, was the highlight of the event. She advised us on the use of 'controlled puppy parties' and how they can contribute to the practice in many different ways including providing an excellent way of educating clients on good pet ownership and in bonding clients. Sarah kindly shared her knowledge of behaviour, which she has gained over her years of dog training. She warned us how unorganised puppy parties have the potential to exacerbate or even cause long-



term behavioural problems. Therefore, these should not be taken on lightly as it is vitally important that these sessions are carefully planned and structured to succeed. In order to be able to run successful puppy parties it is essential that you understand the following:

- Canine behaviour - common problems;
- Spotting stress;
- Recognising arousal;
- How dogs learn;
- How people learn;
- Breed characteristics;
- Body language; and,
- Basic training skills.

Once you can tick all the above you are on the way to a successful puppy party. Sarah demonstrated (with the help of Lexi, the Border Terrier) three very useful training techniques that we can show our clients to teach their dogs so that they are well mannered and easy to handle when they come into the veterinary practice.

Have them sit inbetween your legs when sitting in the waiting room. This will stop any unwanted bad behaviour such as barking at other dogs.

Train your dog to put their chin into the palm of your hand. This way the vet/nurse can easily examine them without too much drama.

Get them used to facing away from the owner as the pet is normally facing the vet/nurse when being examined.

By simply taking Sarah's three techniques and demonstrating them to our clients in our puppy classes, we can help promote better pet/owner bonding, as well as having well behaved dogs that are used to being handled.

Fi Marjoram then brought us through 'pre-purchase consultations' which have become common in UK practices. The aim of these consultations is to promote better pet ownership and to help owners realise the responsibility and costs that come with owning a pet. The three primary points we need a potential new pet owner to consider are:

- Do they have enough time to give to the animal?
- Can they afford the routine care, insurance and basic necessities that the pet requires?
- Have they the energy to walk the dog every day, no matter what the weather outside? Have they the energy to play with them, train them, socialise them and groom them?

By asking a potential new pet owner these questions, we can make them realise that owning a pet is a very big commitment that should not be taken on lightly.

We should aspire to change the perception of owners so that they look at their veterinary practice as a health/wellness centre and not just somewhere they bring their animal when they are sick. By doing this, our clients and potential new clients will come to us for information as well as essential veterinary care.

By running pre-purchase clinics we can help clients become

responsible pet owners and assist them to make the right decision about choosing a dog or not.

Ciara Reid then brought us through 'cuddle consults' and why owners have a better connection with breeders than they do with vets.

Cuddle consults are another great way of getting the client to bond with vets better as they are very friendly and informative. These consults are run on a one-to-one basis by the nurse. During the appointment, the nurse takes the owners through all the relevant information regarding care of their new arrival, such as the right food, insurance, vaccination and good-animal husbandry. Cuddle consults are separated from vaccination consults, however these can be arranged together if the owner requests it.

Clients have a tendency to follow without question everything that the breeder says. The reason for this is quite simply that they form a better relationship with the breeder than they do with their vet. Responsible breeders involve their new puppy owner in the last stages of gestation. They send them pictures when the puppies are born, they give them regular updates and, when the new owners come to pick up their new puppy, they tend to spend a few hours at the breeders house. The breeder should also ask the new owner to keep them updated with the puppy's progress. This shows us we can learn a lot from breeders. We need to find a way of connecting with the client on that level and cuddle consults are the way to go.

# Your policy has evolved...

- Cover becomes practice based
- Premiums more closely reflect risk
- Separate indemnity limits for each species risk group

## Plus...

- Increased options for part-timers
- No need to inform VDS about temporary replacement vets
- RVNs' criminal & disciplinary cover included within the practice premium

## What will stay the same?

Your policy has evolved, but the VDS will still be run by vets, for vets, with a uniquely experienced team who understand the issues you face and the environment in which you work. You will continue to benefit from unlimited access to our comprehensive advisory service and immediate advice on complaints and claims handling. We will continue to work as hard as ever to defend your reputation, with help, guidance and support available if you are facing challenges from the profession's regulators.

## Contact us for more information!



The Veterinary Defence Society Limited, 4, King Street, Newcastle Square, Colchester, Essex CO1 1DZ

Authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.



tel: +44 (0) 1565 652 737

web: [www.thevds.co.uk](http://www.thevds.co.uk)

email: [admin@thevds.co.uk](mailto:admin@thevds.co.uk)