

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact: Dave Green, 919/513-6662 or david_green@ncsu.edu

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Pet Nutrition Service Now Available Through NC State's Veterinary Teaching Hospital

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH) at North Carolina State University's College of Veterinary Medicine has added a nutrition service to its list of 16 clinical specialties that are available to referring veterinarians and their patients.

Nutrition specialist Dr. Korinn Saker has joined the staff to direct the new offering. She will consult with referring veterinarians and with VTH clinicians on the nutritional requirements of both critical and non-critical care patients in the hospital, will be available to consult with referring veterinarians on various nutrition-related issues involving their non-hospitalized clients, and will be available to support individual owners in creating appropriate diets for their animals.

The integration of a formal nutrition service within the VTH is a planned addition to hospital services and comes in the aftermath of the national concern over the safety of pet food. Regarding the pet food recall, Saker advises pet owners to be attentive to the issue but not to overreact.

"A primary reason major pet food companies formulate and market commercial pet foods is that they want to ensure a complete and balanced diet for your pet," Saker says. "As long as the food is designated for your pet's life stage and/or identified disease state, you can be reasonably reassured that it is all you need to feed the pet every day. The mainstream pet food companies spend a great deal of research, time, and expertise in formulating healthy, safe diets."

Saker is not opposed to owners who want to prepare their own pet food; she will consult with the local veterinarian to understand the pet's nutritional needs and then will advise the owner on how to create a safe and nutritious diet at home. She added a word of caution, however.

"Owners who want to prepare their own pet food cannot just provide pets with people food," Saker says. "It is very difficult to ensure that the pet's diet is nutritionally balanced if the recipe has not been appropriately evaluated. The Internet, articles, or self-help books

cannot be relied upon for this information because your individual pet has specific requirements for protein, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, and vitamins. The wrong combination of human foodstuffs fed to your pet can create nutritional deficiencies or excesses that result in disease. If the animal is young and growing, the wrong diet can negatively influence musculoskeletal development.”

Another issue is food preparation and storage. Ingredients should be thoroughly cooked to keep bacteria from forming and creating concerns such as Salmonella or *E.coli*. Unless food is prepared fresh for each meal, appropriate freezing followed by proper thawing, heating, and then serving at room temperature are other steps that must be followed.

While the majority of her consults are expected to involve companion animals, Saker’s nutritional expertise includes horses, pigmy goats, sheep, potbelly pigs, lamas, alpacas, and other animals. As an associate professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine’s Department of Molecular Biomedical Sciences, her nutrition research will include obesity, cancer, and critical care with emphasis on the relationship between oxidativestress and disease.

Saker is a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Nutrition who comes to NC State after serving at Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine as clinical nutritionist and associate professor. She completed her residency in clinical nutrition and her post-doctoral work in nutritional immunology at Virginia-Maryland.

A small- and mixed-animal private practice veterinarian for five years, Saker has a master’s degree in animal nutrition with a focus on equine nutrition from Clemson University, a DVM degree from the University of Georgia, and a doctorate in nutrition from Virginia Tech.

Veterinarians and owners who are interested in more information on the VTH nutrition service, including private consultations, can call 919/513-6488 or e-mail korinn_saker@ncsu.edu.

The VTH was established in 1983 to provide state-of-the-art veterinary medical services for veterinarians and the animal-owning public. Some 19,000 patients – primarily companion animals and horses – are examined in the VTH small- and large-animal clinics each year.

The VTH partners with veterinarians and animal organizations that refer difficult cases to hospital specialists for consults, diagnosis and treatment. This partnership is designed to provide seamless health care for patients who benefit from the combined expertise of multiple specialists functioning in a team approach to health care.