



LifeStage Nutrition

Feeding animals foods designed to meet their optimum nutritional needs at a specific age or physiologic state (e.g., maintenance, reproduction, growth or senior) is known as lifestage nutrition. The lifestage nutrition concept recognizes that feeding below or above an optimal nutrient range can have a negative consequence on biologic performance or health. The life stage concept is substantially different from the “all lifestages” concept of feeding. The “all lifestages” concept involves feeding a single product for “all lifestages” (all-purpose foods), and nutrients are added at levels to meet the highest potential need (typically growth and reproduction). However, when fed all-purpose foods adult animals are being provided nutrients well above their biologic needs. The goals in veterinary nutrition are to feed for ideal health, performance, and longevity. Consequently, it is preferable to feed foods designed to diligently meet the individual patient needs. This philosophy is the central tenant to lifestage nutrition and preventive medicine.

The veterinary healthcare team should evaluate and attempt to reduce any nutrition-related health risks at each lifestage, along with providing advice about the basic nutritional requirements of pets. Ideally, risk assessment and prevention plans should start before disease begins. Incorporating risk factor management into the pet’s feeding plan improves the value of lifestage feeding. Oftentimes, combining the nutritional requirements associated with a pet’s age and physiologic state with the nutritional goals of disease risk factor reduction; an optimal range of nutrient recommendations is the result.