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Profiling your patients

A patient's age and environment and the attitude and compliance of each pet owner affects the care pets need and receive. Are you setting goals that reflect the realities of your patient data?

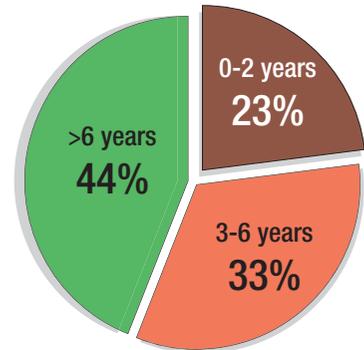
Taking a close look at patient data may highlight areas of opportunity for your practice. For example, "The State of the American Pet" survey, prepared for Ralston Purina by Yankelovich Partners in October 2000, shows that 80 percent of pet owners own only a dog or a cat, not both (see "Most Pets Don't Have Furry Siblings," page 68). According to the study, 70 percent of dog owners own just one dog and 25 percent own two dogs. Are you seeing all patients within each household? Are multiple pets in one household suffering from the same healthcare issues? Are you seeing your patients on a regular schedule?

According to the 2001 Well-Managed



figure 1

Ages of active patients



Source: 2001 Well-Managed Practice Study, co-sponsored by Wutchiett Tumblin and Associates Inc. and Veterinary Economics

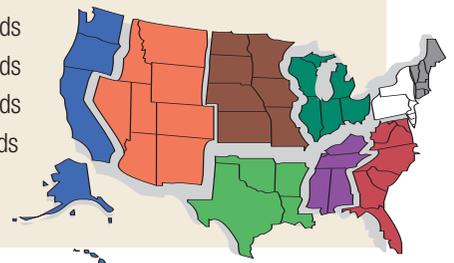
demographic tools

Count the pets in your community

To determine the total number of pets in your area, multiply 0.589 by the total number of households in your area. Use these formulas for more specific numbers:

- **Dogs:** 0.316 X total number of households
- **Cats:** 0.273 X total number of households
- **Birds:** 0.046 X total number of households
- **Horses:** 0.015 X total number of households

Source: AVMA U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook, 1997



Client Relations

Practice Study, co-sponsored by Wutchiett Tumblin and Associates Inc. and Veterinary Economics, pets visit a veterinarian an average of 2.6 times per year and come to the practice for non-doctor visits an-

other 1.3 times—for a total of 3.9 visits a year. Are you encouraging frequent visits? Are you using every appointment to educate pet owners and to encourage compliance with your healthcare recommendations?

client compliance

How many of your patients get all the basic care they need?

- In a survey of pet owners prepared for Ralston Purina by Yankelovich Partners, 30 percent of dog owners who hadn't spayed or neutered their pets said they just hadn't bothered having it done yet.

- In a heartworm study published in the 1995 Proceedings of the American Heartworm Symposium, investigators found that dogs received heartworm medication for an average of 4.2 months, or 41 percent of the target goal for heartworm prevention. This study also found that 52 percent of the dogs visiting these

clinics never received heartworm medication at all.

- According to a study published in the *Journal of Veterinary Dentistry's* 11th issue of 1994, a group of pet owners received instructions about how to brush their dogs' teeth. Six months later, only 50 percent of those clients were providing the minimum care necessary to prevent periodontal disease.



about pet households

Most pets don't have furry siblings

- Seventy percent of dog owners own only one dog; 25 percent own two; and 5 percent own three.

- Sixty-six percent of cat owners own only one cat; 28 percent own two; and 6 percent own three.

- Eighty percent of pet owners own only a cat or a dog, not both. Thirty-two percent own one or more cats, 48 percent own one or more dogs, and 20 percent own

both cats and dogs.

- Thirty-eight percent of pet owners own a purebred dog or cat.

- Sixty-three percent of pet owners share their home with a dog or cat that's less than 7 years old. Eleven percent own a pet that's younger than 1 year; 52 percent own a 1- to 6-year-old pet; 27 percent own a 7- to 12-year-old pet; and 8 percent own a pet that's older than 12 years. Two percent don't know their pet's age.



Source: "The State of the American Pet" survey, Ralston Purina, 2000.