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Pro Plan Veterinary Diets Launches Veterinary Support Mission

Q If one thing has remained constant in the veterinary industry, it has been *change*. What do you see as the most significant opportunities and challenges veterinarians face today?

A There are many examples of both! On the positive side, **veterinary research** has brought us many innovative diagnostic tools, medications and dietary therapies, and these have had a significant and positive effect on the lives of our patients. **Pet ownership** is at an all-time high in the United States, and owners also have unprecedented access to **online information** about pet health conditions and their management.

At the same time, the **cost of veterinary education** has risen exponentially, triggering an accompanying burden of student debt. A global health pandemic that spanned several years also accelerated additional industry changes, from expanding the growth of **telemedicine** and **online pharmacies** to creating new **disparities in client access to veterinary care**. Finally, the **rising cost of living** has affected owners' willingness—and sometimes their ability—to pay for veterinary care.

The bottom line: While advancements in veterinary medicine, technology and communication are improving the lives of pets, veterinarians and pet owners need our support now more than ever.

Q How are the veterinary industry and veterinarians answering this call to care?

A Through all these changes, one vital factor has remained constant: **the passion all veterinarians like me share for improving the lives of patients and their families.**

Many companies and organizations that support the veterinary industry have demonstrated their commitment to veterinary professionals in heartfelt, positive ways. From conducting veterinary well-being studies to providing scholarships for student debt relief; from funding psychological support services to finding new and innovative ways to provide continuing education, much is being done to support the veterinary profession. But if the bond between veterinarians and clients and pets, is to continue to thrive, we all must continue to do our part.

That's why Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets has launched the **Pro Plan Veterinary Support Mission**, a new initiative to help remove barriers veterinarians often face in practice. As its first act, the brand donated \$1 million to the American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF) REACH

Program™, which offers grants to veterinarians providing immediate pet care when owners experience financial hardship. Through this ongoing initiative, we've committed to making a meaningful difference by supporting programs that help veterinarians navigate what can be challenging interactions with clients and allow them to answer our call to care.



Veterinary Support Mission expands “reach” of REACH

The REACH (Reaching Every Animal with Charitable Healthcare) Program was created by the AVMF to increase assistance to the most vulnerable communities and bring the foundation's “Helping Veterinarians Help Animals” motto to life. The program, which received \$1.2 million from Pro Plan Veterinary Diets in 2023, has grown since its inception in 2022 and has the resources now to assist thousands of animals.

According to the AVMF, the REACH Program is equipped to deliver financial grants to practices whose clients may be experiencing financial hardship. Through the REACH program, the burden placed on veterinarians who provide charitable care can be eased and more help provided to ensure pets receive the expert veterinary services they need.

Veterinarians can visit

www.ProPlanVetSupport.com

to learn more about the Pro Plan Veterinary Support Mission and the AVMF REACH Program.


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AVMF REACH SPOTLIGHT 1

Daisy Blossoms After Parvovirus Treatment



Christina Frick, DVM
Frick Veterinary Services
Larned, Kansas

Daisy, a mixed-breed puppy, was brought in as an emergency case at 2 months of age by her owners, an older couple. She weighed only 8 pounds and was suffering with anorexia, vomiting, loose stool and dehydration. Since Daisy was acquired from a farm, she had received minimal veterinary care, including a single DAPP vaccine and an antiemetic. However, the vomiting and diarrhea had failed to improve.

I performed a parvovirus test, which came back positive. We are a parvo-endemic area, so I assumed Daisy was exposed at the farm where she was acquired. In order to survive, she needed intravenous (IV) therapy and hospitalization.

The owners wanted very much to give Daisy a chance at life, even



significantly reduce the expenses for medical care related to Daisy's parvovirus treatment.

Daisy's recovery took several months. I first placed her in isolation and administered IV fluids to treat her dehydration, along with an antiemetic and an antibiotic to manage the bacterial infection that typically accompanies parvovirus. She finally began to eat a little by Day 7, so I sent her home to be in a more normal environment. While she suffered a setback or two over the next several

though one of them was due to have shoulder surgery and the couple's finances were tight. Fortunately, through a charitable grant from the AVMF REACH Program™, I was able to

weeks and months, she continued to recover. By 6 months of age, Daisy had been given a full series of parvo vaccines, as well as other needed immunizations, and weighed 32 pounds. She now eats a gastrointestinal diet that works well for her. And now that her owner has successfully recovered from shoulder surgery, he is able to participate in Daisy's care.

Today, Daisy is current on all vaccines, as well as heartworm and flea and tick prevention. Daisy's owners are optimistic about her future and happy that their puppy is well on the road to recovery.

It's been my experience that when pet owners who are experiencing financial hardship can be helped when a pet-care crisis occurs, the chances that they will continue to return to the practice for routine veterinary care often improve. The REACH Program has been wonderful for my clinic. I am so happy to have saved a parvo puppy!



AVMF REACH SPOTLIGHT 2

Obi's Star Shines Bright Through Health Challenges



Hannah Allen, DVM
West Spartan Animal Hospital
Greer, South Carolina

Our companion animal hospital was established in 1983, and I am one of three veterinarians on staff. Our mission is to provide high-quality veterinary care by treating every client as family and every pet as our own.

We recently had a wonderful opportunity to live our mission with Obi, a Shepherd/Pug mix, and his amazing owners. All parties were able to benefit from a grant through the AVMF REACH Program™.

In November 2022, when Obi was 8 months old, he began having seizures. We started him on anti-seizure



medications. The following February, he developed a fever and was head pressing. We referred him to a neurologist who performed a CSF analysis and an MRI. The resulting diagnosis was meningoencephalitis without an infectious cause. Obi's owners elected to begin steroid therapy in addition to cytarabine injections.

After doing well for almost a year, Obi presented back at our hospital with severe acute gastroenteritis. He was hospitalized and treated with IV fluids and IV antibiotics. He responded well to therapy and was discharged after four days.

Obi's owners were already doing everything they could for him financially. After his hospitalization for gastroenteritis, however, they were unsure how to cover the unexpected cost and were heartbroken at the prospect that they might not be able to continue Obi's ongoing care. Applying for a grant from REACH to cover Obi's hospital bill was discussed, and they were extremely relieved when the grant application was accepted.

While Obi recently passed away at home, his owners cherish the time they were able to spend with him and are thankful they did not have to make the decision to cut Obi's time short due to financial constraints.



AVMF REACH SPOTLIGHT 3

AVMF Grant Keeps Diabetic Cat With Loving Owner



Stacy Bridges, DVM
Pawsitive Hope Inc.
North Canton, Ohio

After graduating from veterinary school, I worked at a general practice clinic for several years, then accepted an opportunity to create a medical program at the local municipal animal shelter. While there, I noticed that many animals needed a better place to recover and that some weren't able to receive additional work-up or treatments that could be beneficial due to underfunding. In addition, some people would adopt animals without fully understanding their medical needs. I founded Pawsitive Hope Inc.—a nonprofit animal rescue serving Stark County, Ohio—to address some of those concerns.



Charlie came to Pawsitive Hope several years ago. His original owner

had passed away and his daughter was caring for him. She noticed an increase in thirst and urination and brought Charlie to a veterinarian who diagnosed him with diabetes mellitus.

Unfortunately, Charlie's new owner couldn't pay for the ongoing medical care he required and euthanasia

was discussed. The clinic contacted Pawsitive Hope to see if we could help. We spoke with the owner and offered to provide Charlie with routine and diabetes-related medical care for life including, at a minimum, twice-yearly bloodwork and urinalysis, insulin, therapeutic food for his diabetes, and monthly flea/tick and heartworm prevention. Charlie's owner agreed to supply litter and toys, and administers

Charlie's daily insulin injection.

We recently received a grant from the AVMF REACH Program™, which helps fund Charlie's diabetes care. This, in turn, has made it possible for us to use some of our own funding to help another animal in need. Today, Charlie's diabetes is controlled, and we are in the process of determining whether we might be able to decrease his insulin dose and eventually wean him off insulin entirely.

Charlie is loved deeply by his owner and she is committed to caring for him. Many people like her simply are at a point in their lives where they can't fund lifesaving care for the animals they love. Programs like REACH help us assure an owner that they can receive the assistance needed to care for their pets and keep families like this together.



AVMF REACH SPOTLIGHT 4

The Special Bond of (Furry) Family



Jennifer Yee, DVM
BluePearl Pet Hospital
Tampa, Florida

I work as the sole radiation oncologist at a large specialty practice in Tampa. I treat dogs, cats and some exotics.

When Fotaungyee, a 13-year-old cat, was brought to us for a face-deforming nasal squamous cell carcinoma, his owner was undergoing financial hardship, had no vehicle and no paid time off from her job. However, she wanted to give her cat the best chance for long-term control. With no children, she considered Fotaungyee family.

Fortunately, through a grant from the AVMF REACH Program™, we were able to help fund Fotaungyee's care. The owner took unpaid time off from work and paid for daily transport to bring Fotaungyee in for 18 days (Monday



through Friday) of consecutive daily radiation treatment under anesthesia.

In addition to the nasal tumor, Fotaungyee was also suffering from unregulated

diabetes mellitus. We monitored his blood glucose levels during radiation treatment and conducted intermittent rechecks with our internal medicine team to ensure he was stable and able to safely undergo anesthesia during radiation.

Throughout the radiation treatment, the tumor visibly shrank, with noticeable reductions in eye and nasal discharges. A comparison of before and after photos—the latter taken around four weeks following radiation

treatment—illustrates his marked improvement. Fotaungyee's owner was excited about this development and happy to see her cat acting like himself again. Meanwhile, funds from REACH were used for Fotaungyee's follow-up medical care, which included both radiation oncology and internal medicine visits.

The cost of veterinary care can be overwhelming for owners, especially when unexpected health issues occur or an emergency arises. In our practice, grants from REACH have enabled us to help owners such as these and allowed us to provide the best medical care for pets.

