



GETTING CATS BACK TO YOUR PRACTICE WITH THE AAFP CAT FRIENDLY CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Kelly St. Denis, DVM, MS, DABVP (Feline) & Anne Ward, DVM

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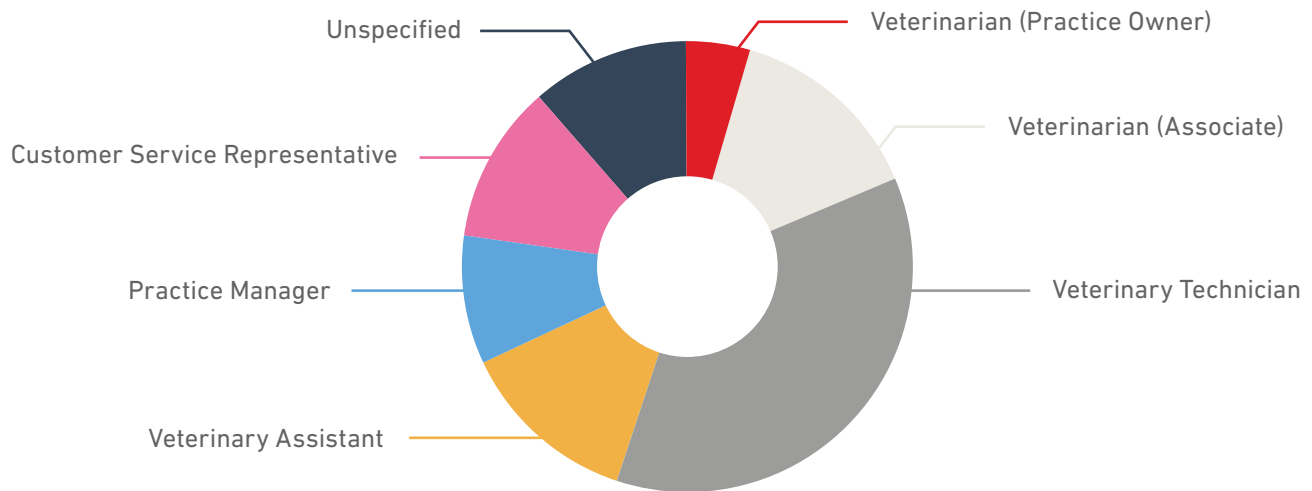
Getting cats to the veterinarian for care is an ongoing challenge to the veterinary profession. Caregiver concerns about the cat’s welfare before, during, and after the veterinary visit, as well as their own stress, negatively impact their decision to return.¹ Concern about fear-anxiety experienced by cats during the veterinary visits lead to missed opportunities for feline preventive care.^{2,3} Building on the philosophy of their Cat Friendly Practice® (CFP) Program, the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) developed the Cat Friendly Certificate Program for all veterinary team members. The Program is intended to improve individual knowledge, skills, and best in-clinic practices for feline medicine. The certificate offers RACE-approved continuing education available in three categories: Cat Friendly Veterinarian®, Cat Friendly Veterinary Professional®, and Cat Friendly Veterinary Advocate®. Each certificate category is designed for specific roles in the veterinary practice (Table 1), building confidence in working with and understanding cats.

Certificate	Intended for	# of Modules	CE Hours
Cat Friendly Veterinary Advocate®	Practice Team members and veterinary industry partners*	4	2
Cat Friendly Veterinary Professional®	Technicians/Nurses, Managers	7	3.5
Cat Friendly Veterinarian®	Veterinarian	9	5

* Practice team members including customer service representatives, veterinary assistants, kennel care team members, etc.; veterinary industry partners including others in the veterinary industry, professional groomers, pet nutrition advocates, veterinary pharmacists etc.

Since launching in 2020, the AAFP Cat Friendly Certificate Program has met with significant success. Over 11,000 certificates have been earned in 74 countries. The objective of the present study was to survey those who have earned Cat Friendly Certificates to determine their satisfaction with the knowledge they have gained. The survey was completed by 822 respondents who received sponsored complimentary access to the Cat Friendly Certificate Program from Royal Canin. Since 2020, 5,961 individuals have completed a Cat Friendly Certificate through Royal Canin-sponsored access.⁴ The survey included questions about general impressions as well as whether the Certificate Program has had an impact on feline return visits, compliance with treatment recommendations, and confidence when providing nutritional recommendations. All team members who completed a Cat Friendly Certificate Program were invited to participate in the survey, including associate veterinarians, practice managers, veterinary technicians, customer service representatives (CSR), and other members of the team.

Respondents by Role in Practice



Key Findings

Satisfied Caregivers and More Visits for Cats

Caregiver concerns about their cat's welfare impact their decision to pursue veterinary care.¹ Reducing the stress of a feline visit and helping caregivers prepare for their cat's visit were important skills that team members gained by taking the Certificate Program. Nearly 98% of all team members reported that the program helped them reduce the stress of a feline visit, and 94% respondents that took the Cat Friendly Advocate[®] Certificate felt that cat caregivers are now better prepared for the visit as a result of the guidance they can now provide. Overall, 92% of respondents indicated that they believe cat caregivers are more satisfied with their veterinary experience as a result of the program. This increase in caregivers' satisfaction should be favorable towards improving return visits. In fact, for teams that completed the survey more than six months after earning their certificate, 50% of practice managers reported an increase in feline return visits, while 29% said it was too soon to tell.



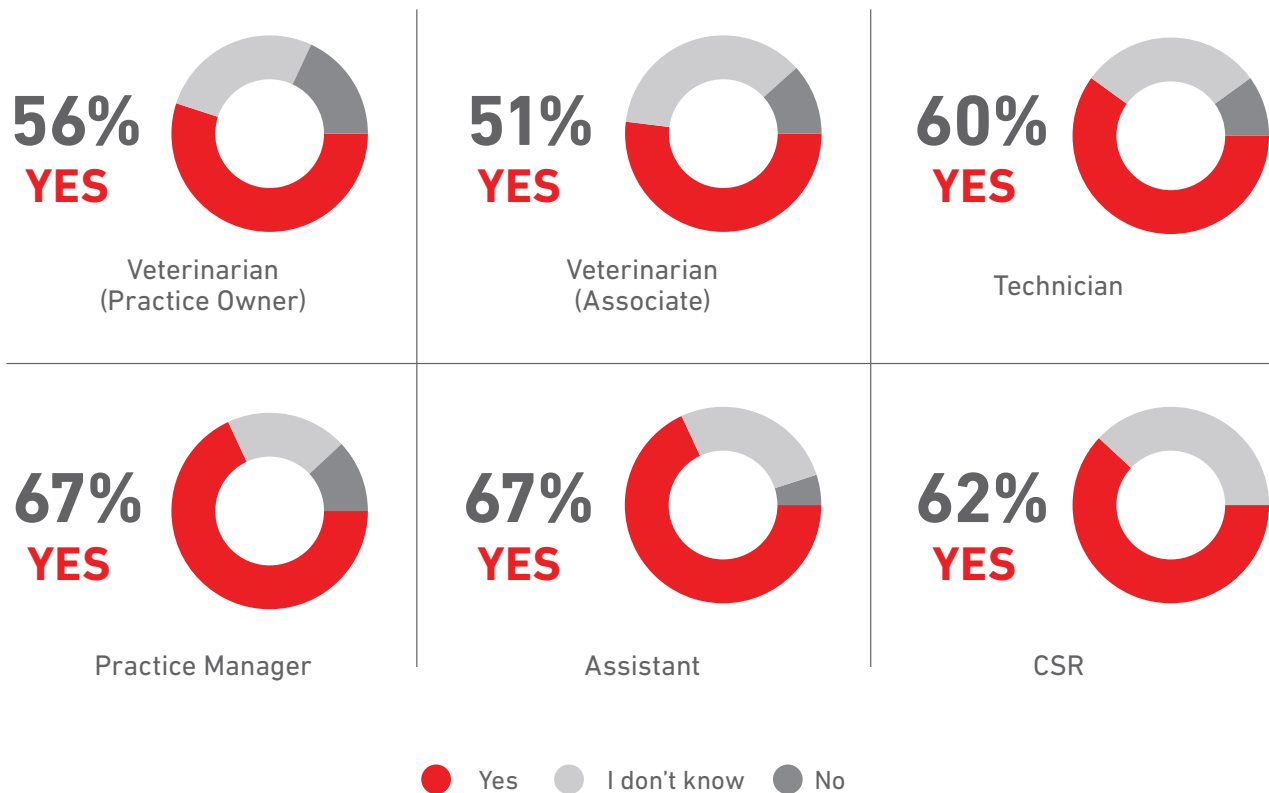
More Successful Interactions with Cats

The ability to understand a cat's unique needs in the veterinary setting is a key message of the Certificate Program. Of all respondents surveyed, 98% reported that their skills were enhanced by the program to more valuably contribute to feline visits. It was reported by 98% of those that completed the Cat Friendly Veterinary Professional® Certificate that the program helped them better interact with and handle cats. Additionally, 98% of those completing the Cat Friendly Veterinarian® Certificate reported gaining insight and information on providing enhanced care for cats, and 98% of all survey respondents reported that they are now able to create a better experience for feline patients who are stressed during visits. Since completing the certificate, many respondents had made changes at their practices and in their interactions with cats. These changes included creating a better waiting room experience (47%), utilizing a better understanding on how to approach and interact with cats (85%), creating a better experience with hospitalization (58%), and implementing other strategies and recommendations learned from the Certificate Program (54%). Over 88% reported that they had implemented strategies and techniques to promote positive experiences for the cat including utilizing towels, examining the cat in the cat's preferred location, offering treats and other positive reinforcement, giving cats a break to minimize fear-anxiety, and/or other stress-reducing tactics. Reflecting a recent publication which demonstrated that Cat Friendly Practices® perform increased laboratory testing,⁵ 73% of all survey respondents reported it has become easier to collect diagnostic samples from cats.

Improving Caregiver Confidence

The ability to provide Cat Friendly care is expected to improve not only the cat's but also the caregiver's experience.⁶ Caregivers may be more likely to agree with team recommendations as a result.⁵ Getting caregiver approval for a treatment plan was reported to be easier for all members of the care team, including 52% of veterinarians and over 60% of technicians, assistants, practice managers, and CSRs who responded to the survey. Increased caregiver approval may have translated to increased spending, with 81% of practice managers reporting an increase in the average transaction value of feline visits.

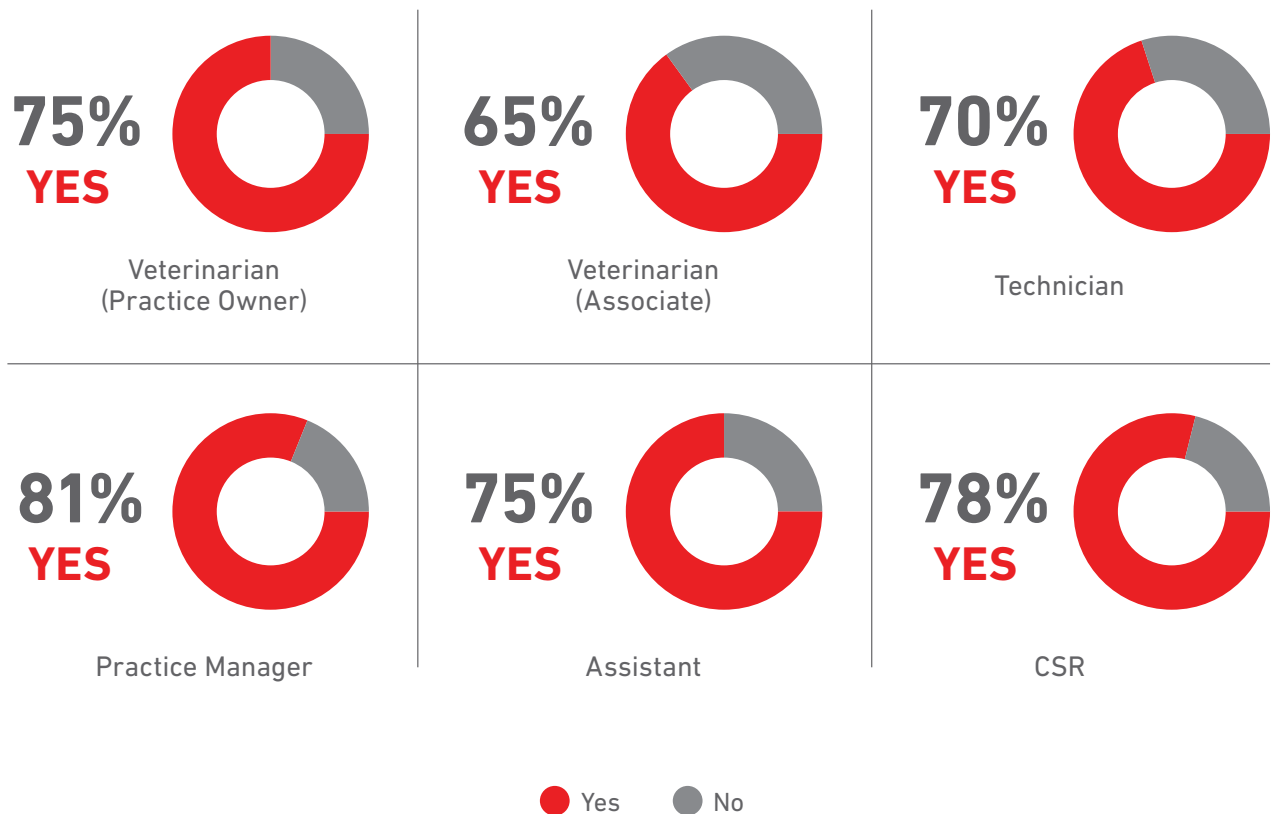
Since completing the Certificate Program, is it easier for you and your team to gain caregiver approval for the recommended treatment plan?



Confidence in Providing Nutritional Recommendations

Nutritional recommendations are foundational in both preventive and therapeutic care. Respondents of the survey were asked about their confidence in making nutritional recommendations. For 76% of all respondents, including 67% of all veterinarians, 70% of technicians, 75% of assistants, 78% of CSRs, and 81% of practice managers, completing the Certificate Program gave them better preparedness to provide nutritional recommendations. A previous study examining purchase of therapeutic diets within the veterinary clinic demonstrated that Cat Friendly care can increase caregiver acceptance of nutritional recommendations.⁷ Taken together, these findings suggest that implementation of the knowledge contained within the Cat Friendly Certificate Program has the potential to improve compliance with nutritional recommendations, and hence, nutrition-associated health outcomes.

Are you more prepared to provide nutrition recommendations?



Value for Every Team Member

The positive responses from associate veterinarians, technicians, managers, and CSRs reinforce the important role that all team members play in improving feline visits and highlights the many benefits of the Certificate Program. For example, when considering training of new team members, 95% of associate veterinarians believed that the program would be valuable for onboarding new team members. Since its launch, the Cat Friendly Certificate Program has been well-received by veterinary team members world-wide. The data from this survey have confirmed the role of the Certificate Program in improving feline visits, improving team skill and confidence, and getting cats back into the practice.

Learn More

For more information about Royal Canin-sponsored access to the AAFP Cat Friendly Certificate Program, please go to <https://catvets.com/rc> and ask your Royal Canin representative how your clinic can qualify for a coupon code for free registration!



References

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4. AAFP. Cat Friendly Certificate Data on File; December 2023.
5. St. Denis KS, Saffire A, Michael H, et al. Cat Friendly Practice[®] improves feline visits, resulting in increased laboratory testing and increased diagnosis of certain common feline conditions. *J Feline Med Surg* 2023; 25: 1098612X231204199.
6. AAFP. 2022 CFP Survey Results.
7. Mercader P. Being friendly to cats... is it worth the effort? *Veterinary Focus*, 2019, pp. 18–20.