

Inaugural Feline Summit Unites Veterinary and Animal Health Leaders to Advance the Future of Feline Care

Industry leaders convene to identify barriers, align priorities and accelerate the future of feline healthcare

The inaugural Feline Summit, held July 19-21, brought together leaders from across veterinary medicine and animal health to explore opportunities, challenges, and solutions that will shape the future of feline healthcare.

Convened and led by the [Feline Veterinary Medical Association](#) (FelineVMA) and hosted by an [TriviumVet/PRN Pharmacal](#), the Summit created a unique forum for candid conversations, collaboration and strategic discussions focused on improving feline health and wellbeing while strengthening the systems that support their care.

Participants examined emerging trends affecting feline healthcare. One theme emerged consistently: No single organization, segment, company or individual can transform feline healthcare alone. Sustainable progress will require collaboration across the veterinary industry to strengthen every part of the feline ecosystem, from education and research to product development, communications, practice operations and clinical care.

“Cats represent one of the greatest opportunities in veterinary medicine,” said Heather O’Steen, CAE, CEO of the FelineVMA. “To meet their needs, we must work together to better understand cats, remove barriers to care, educate future professionals, support veterinary teams, and create systems designed with cats in mind.”

Why the conversation matters now

Summit participants discussed several converging trends shaping the future of feline healthcare:

- More cats are living in households than ever before.
- Treatments for both chronic and life-threatening feline diseases continue to evolve.
- Cats are living longer, increasing the need for lifelong care that includes preventive health, diagnostics, treatments, and chronic disease management.
- Workforce shortages and capacity challenges continue to affect veterinary practices.
- Caregiver expectations and demographics are changing.



- Technology is rapidly transforming how veterinary care is delivered and accessed.
- Despite these developments, cats continue to receive veterinary care less frequently than dogs.

Recent industry data further highlights the importance of understanding evolving pet demographics. **CATalyst Council** has reported that canine/puppy visits have been declining while kitten visits remained comparatively stronger, reinforcing the need for the veterinary profession to closely monitor changing trends and opportunities within the feline population.

Summit attendees recognized these findings as an opportunity for the industry to better engage cat caregivers and ensure more cats receive the care they need throughout their lives.

A system not originally designed for cats

Participants also emphasized that advancing feline healthcare begins with a deeper understanding of cats as a species. Feline patients experience veterinary care, handling and their environment differently, requiring approaches tailored to their unique behavioral, emotional and medical needs. As veterinary medicine continues to evolve, there is growing recognition that systems, experiences, products and services designed intentionally for cats can result in better outcomes for everyone involved.

For decades, many veterinary systems and processes evolved around canine patients. While those



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approaches have served veterinary medicine well, participants discussed adapting care models to better address the realities of feline medicine and behavior.

Every missed veterinary visit reflects one or more barriers, from transportation challenges and carrier-related stress to prior negative experiences, difficulties administering medications, scheduling concerns, communication gaps, financial considerations and veterinary environments or interactions that may inadvertently increase feline

distress. Addressing these barriers offers a significant opportunity to improve feline health outcomes and increase engagement with veterinary care.

Cat-Friendly care is proven to work

One area of strong consensus among attendees was the value of **Cat Friendly principles**, care and practices. Veterinary professionals who have implemented Cat Friendly approaches consistently report benefits including:

- More frequent veterinary visits.

- › Reduced stress for cats and caregivers.
- › More thorough examinations, increased diagnostics, and earlier disease detection
- › Improving feline welfare.
- › Improved experiences, confidence, and efficiency for veterinary teams.
- › Fewer injuries and lower workers' compensation claims.
- › Improved practice growth.
- › Supporting continuing education and practical resources for veterinary teams.
- › Promoting language that reflects what cats are experiencing rather than how their behavior is perceived, leading to better understanding and outcomes.
- › Raising awareness of the unique needs of cats among students, veterinary teams, caregivers, and

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The Summit emphasized that enhancing feline care does not necessarily require dramatic or costly changes. Often, small adjustments in communication, handling, environment, workflow, and education can create meaningful improvements for cats, caregivers and veterinary teams alike.

Looking Ahead: Education, awareness and collaboration

Throughout the Summit's in-depth discussions, several priorities emerged for future action:

- › Increasing feline-focused education within veterinary and veterinary technician schools.
- › Expanding Cat Friendly principles within teaching hospitals and educational settings.

the broader public.

- › Encouraging communications, visual resources, and video that reflect Cat Friendly care, support feline welfare, and demonstrate positive veterinary experiences.
- › Creating greater alignment across industry stakeholders.

Attendees agreed that increasing the medicalization of cats and improving feline health outcomes will require contributions from ALL—veterinary professionals, students, educators, researchers, nonprofits, industry partners, practice managers/leaders, technology innovators, communicators, investors and shelter/animal welfare organizations.

A new industry initiative

To build on the momentum of the Summit, the FelineVMA announced plans to launch a Cat Friendly Campaign this fall focused on providing optimal care for cats. The initiative will provide tools, resources, education and practical guidance to help veterinary teams and organizations enhance feline care through actionable strategies that can be implemented across a variety of settings.

Building the future, together

The Feline Summit concluded with a shared belief that the future of feline healthcare is not predetermined. The veterinary profession has a choice: continue with existing models or intentionally create systems that better reflect the needs of today's cats, caregivers, and veterinary teams.

The FelineVMA welcomes conversations with organizations, leaders, and partners who share a commitment to advancing feline healthcare and continuing this collaboration. We invite prospective partners, sponsors, exhibitors, and innovators to connect with us at [FelineVMA Conferences](#) as we collectively shape the future of feline medicine.

The opportunity before us is significant. Together, we can create a future in which more cats receive the healthcare they deserve, caregivers feel better supported, veterinary teams are empowered to deliver exceptional feline care, and the entire profession benefits from a stronger, healthier feline ecosystem.