

# Ensuring Pets Receive the Full Benefits of Medication for Longer, Healthier Lives

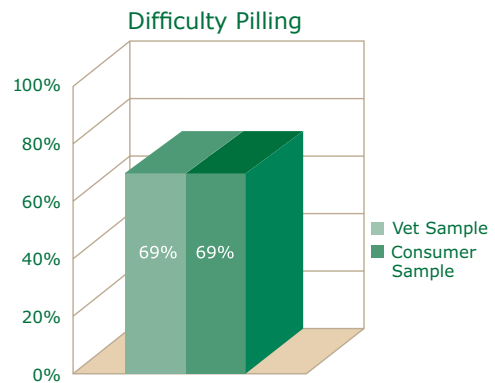
Bradley Quest, DVM

Recent studies confirm that compliance with administering oral medications is a serious issue. In two separate surveys, both veterinarians and pet owners agreed that pilling can be difficult and that this trouble with pilling has a negative impact on the health of pets. Difficulty in pilling results in missed doses and, more serious, the discontinuation of medication. Proactive guidance for successful pilling methods at the time of prescription can positively impact pet health, reduce pet owner anxiety and build happier owner and pet relationships.

## Nearly 7 out of 10 Pet Owners Experience Difficulty Pilling

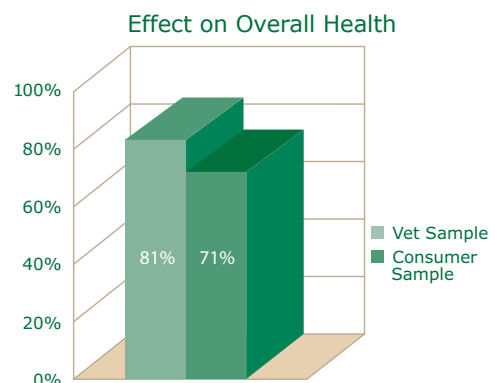
When veterinarians prescribe medication, the pet owner takes on the responsibility for administering it. Unfortunately, encouraging a dog or cat to accept a pill is not an easy task. Sixty-nine percent of veterinarians indicated top-2 box agreement that pilling is a significant problem for pet owners.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, 69 percent of pet owners report difficulty encouraging a dog or cat to accept a pill.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, four out of five pet owners report pets spitting out pills after they thought the pet had initially accepted the medication.

While it is agreed that pilling can be difficult, veterinarians and pet owners also agree that successful pilling is a very important contributing factor to the systemic health of pets. The data indicates that difficult pilling may adversely affect pet health.<sup>1</sup> The good news is that both veterinarians and pet owners concur on this and the importance of medication compliance. From this shared view, veterinarians have a starting point for addressing and overcoming pilling difficulties.



Veterinary Survey: "The ability to pill pets is a significant issue for clients." (Top 2 box statement agreement.)

Consumer Survey: "In general how difficult do you find it is to give your pet a pill?" (Percent indicating level of difficulty.)



Veterinary Survey: "The ability of client to successfully pill their pets affects the overall health of the pet." (Top 2 box statement agreement.)

Consumer Survey: "The ability to successfully administer pills to my pet affects its overall health." (Top 2 box statement agreement.)

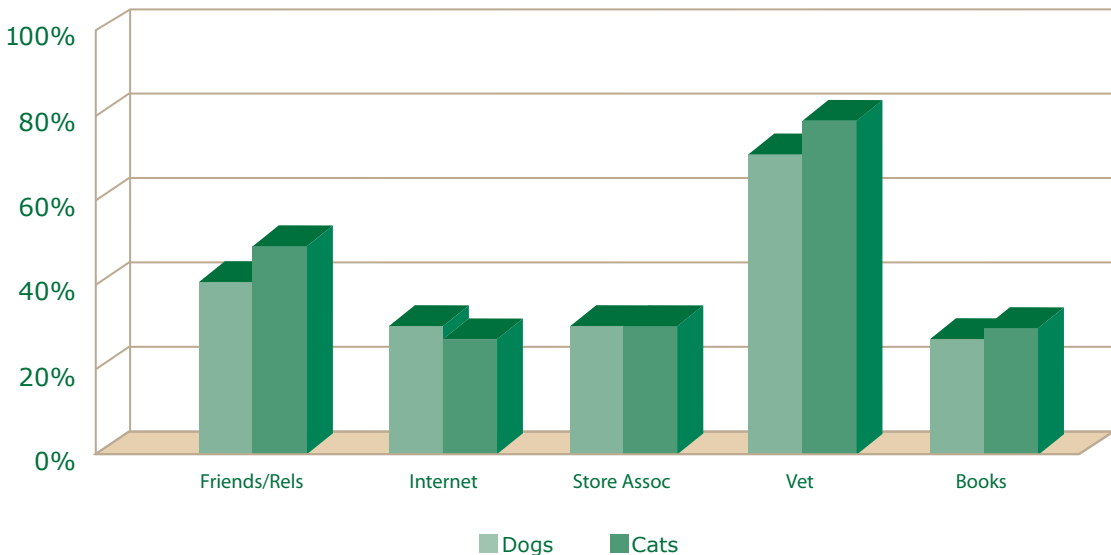
## Pilling Methods

Increasing the pet owner's success rate for pilling will help to ensure their pet's better systemic health. Dog owners most frequently report using human food or pet food to assist with pilling. Cat owners most often resort to dry pilling or pet food. At the same time, pet owners are reporting difficulties with pilling, leading to the conclusion that there probably are better alternatives to the most commonly used methods.

A pet initially accepting a pill does not guarantee that the pill was fully ingested. In addition to the pet spitting out its medication, a dry pill can also become lodged in the esophagus for a period of time, posing additional health risks. Dry pilling acidic medications, such as doxycycline, has been associated with esophagitis in cats.<sup>2</sup>

When pet owners do experience problems administering medication, they access a variety of resources for guidance. However, the most relied upon resource is their veterinarian. With about 8 out of 10 pet owners reporting that they are most likely to ask their veterinarian about successful pilling methods,<sup>1</sup> there is a large window of opportunity for pilling education right inside the hospital doors. Knowing that pet owners want the information from their veterinarian makes the hospital the best place to provide consumer education as well as increase pilling compliance and success rates.

## Sources of Information



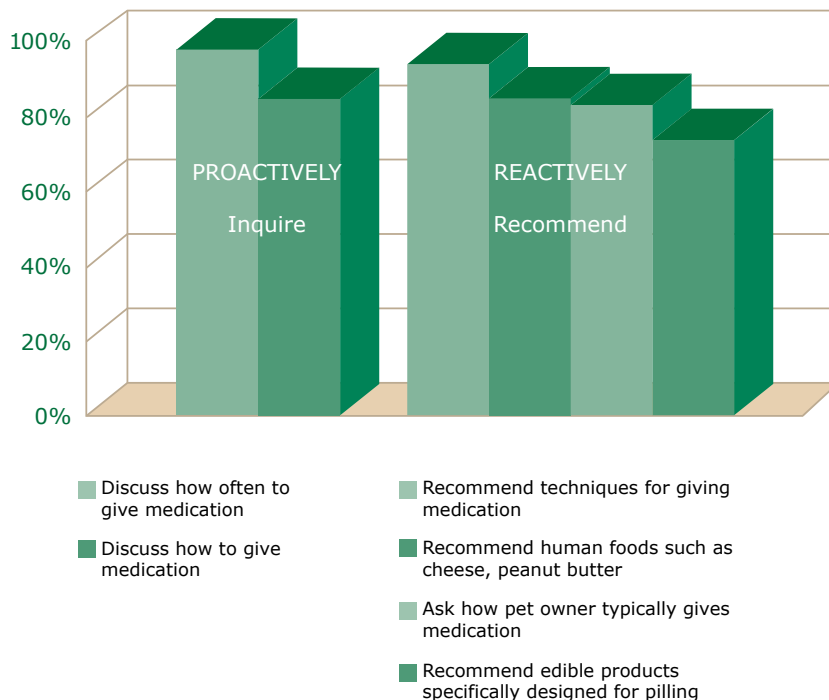
"How likely are you to use the following information sources to learn ways to successfully give a pill to your pet?" (Multiple response question. Top 2 box likelihood.)



## Proactive Guidance Leads to Better Medicine and Increased Client Satisfaction

Pet owners are disposed to rely on veterinarians for instruction on successful pilling, yet veterinarians have a tendency to wait until the client expresses trouble with pilling before offering guidance. Veterinarians report in high numbers their likelihood to proactively discuss the basics—how and how often to administer—upon prescribing medications. However, it is not until the pet owner comes to them with concerns regarding pilling difficulties that the veterinarian is more likely to discuss and recommend various pilling methods.

### Veterinarians — Courses of Action



Proactive Veterinary Recommendations: "When prescribing an oral medication, specifically pills, in which the pet owner will be responsible for the administering to the dog or cat, before any concerns are raised by the pet owner, how likely are you to do the following?" (Top 2 box likelihood.)

Reactive Veterinary Recommendations: "If a pet owner raises a concern about his/her ability to successfully pill his/her pet, how likely are you to do the following?" (Top 2 box likelihood.)

The data indicates that currently, guidance is more often offered as a reactive measure.<sup>1</sup> Unless the pet owner seeks additional information from their veterinarian, they are much less likely to receive the education and guidance needed to ensure success. Therefore, a different approach that veterinarians can take in providing pilling guidance has the potential to be the catalyst to create positive change in the pilling success rates among pet owners.

## Edible Products That Assist in Pilling Increase Success

Dry pilling and use of human and pet foods are commonly used methods for pilling; however, success remains problematic. While the use of an edible product uniquely designed to assist with pilling is not used as frequently by pet owners as the more common methods, the data indicates that those who have used Greenies® Pill Pockets® treats report higher pilling success rates.<sup>1</sup> In addition to increased success rates, edible products are the healthier dietary choice compared to commonly used human foods such as tuna, hot dogs, peanut butter or cheese.

Understanding that pet owners believe pilling to be a challenge is central to proactively providing the resources they need to be successful. Proactively discussing healthy, successful methods for pilling, such as the use of edible products such as Greenies® Pill Pockets® treats designed specifically to aid with the administration of pet medication, should occur at the time the medication is prescribed.

Pilling difficulty is a pet health concern, but it is one that can be rather easily addressed. Veterinarians have the opportunity to increase pilling success rates among pet owners, which in turn will ensure healthier pets.



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## References

<sup>1</sup>Trone Research Proprietary Studies With Veterinary and Pet Owner Panels, February 2008.

<sup>2</sup>German AJ, Cannon MJ, Dye C, et. al. "Oesophageal strictures in cats associated with doxycycline therapy." J Feline Med Surg. 2005 Feb; 7(1): 33-41.