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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AAFP Releases Updated Feline Senior Care Guidelines to the Veterinary Community

The release provides a comprehensive update from the heavily referenced 2009 AAFP Senior Care Guidelines.

[BRIDGEWATER, NJ; June 29, 2021] The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) has released the updated [2021 AAFP Feline Senior Care Guidelines](#) to be published in the July issue of the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*. This update provides emerging advances in feline medicine with respect to the aging cat. The Task Force of experts provides a thorough current review in feline medicine that emphasizes the individual senior patient.

As defined in the [2021 AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines](#), cats over 10 years of age are considered to be 'senior.' Understanding the changing needs of each individual senior cat is critical for both veterinary professionals and cat owners. "Veterinary professionals are encouraged to use the *2021 AAFP Feline Senior Care Guidelines* to enhance their assessment and treatment of age-associated medical conditions and to provide guidance to clients so they are included in their cat's health care team," stated Task Force Co-chair, Hazel Carney, DVM, MS, DABVP (Canine/Feline).

The Guidelines address the importance of regular veterinary visits which includes a minimum of every six months for senior cats 10 to 15 years old in order to best track and manage health-related issues and detect disease early. Healthy senior cats over the age of 15 should be examined every four months. Cats with chronic health issues may need to be seen even more frequently depending on the severity of illness. "The newly emerging concept of frailty is introduced in these Guidelines and how practitioners can incorporate this into the senior cat assessment. They also detail common issues in aging cats including pain management, nutrition and weight management, diseases and conditions, quality of life, and end of life decisions," said Michael Ray, DVM, Task Force Co-chair.

Discussion is included on how quality of life (QOL) and health-related quality of life (HRQOL) impacts the aging cat, and emphasizes veterinarians and cat owners partnering to make well-informed decisions for the individual senior cat. The Task Force also recognizes the impact caring for an aging cat has on the cat owner. Veterinarians are asked to consider four budgets of care when making treatment plans: financial,

time, emotional, and physical. The weight of each of these budgets will vary for each cat owner and it is important to recognize this when having decision-making discussions.

The AAFP provides additional supplementary resources to veterinary teams alongside these Guidelines including information on Quality of Life (QOL) and Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL) instruments, video demonstrations on myofascial examination techniques and cat friendly tips for dental examinations, a printable client brochure, as well as additional recommended resources.

The *2021 AAFP Feline Senior Care Guidelines* and supplemental resources are available at catvets.com/senior-care. Cat owner resources, including the new senior care client brochure, are available at catfriendly.com/senior.

Acknowledgements

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About the American Association of Feline Practitioners

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) improves the health and welfare of cats by supporting high standards of practice, continuing education, and evidence-based medicine (catvets.com). As a trusted leader in the veterinary community, the AAFP has a long-standing reputation and track record for facilitating high standards, including guidelines for practice excellence and educational resources. Over the years, the AAFP has encouraged veterinary professionals to continuously re-evaluate preconceived notions of practice strategies in an effort to advance the quality of feline medicine practiced. Launched in 2012, the Cat Friendly Practice® (CFP) Program (catvets.com/cfp) was created to improve the treatment, handling, and overall healthcare provided to cats. Its purpose is to equip veterinary practices, teams, and individuals with the tools and resources to reduce stress associated with the visit and elevate the standard of care provided to cats. Launched in 2020, the Cat Friendly Certificate Program (catvets.com/certificate) now provides this education to individual veterinary professionals. Catfriendly.com, or Cat Friendly Homes, is the AAFP's cat caregiver educational resource which is powered by feline veterinarians and includes a monthly newsletter, The Cat Column.