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Developing an Awareness of Pet Stewardship

The purpose of this project was to explore if pet owners were aware of the potential risks associated with human food. I hypothesized that if pet owners were questioned about what foods were harmful for their pet(s), then the majority of the people surveyed would accurately identify 75% of the items listed as being safe or harmful. The experiment involved several steps. I first created a survey that listed foods that were commonly given to pets. The survey asked the participants to identify whether or not the food was safe/harmful. Surveys were taken at selected locations or emailed to adult pet owners. Instructions were provided to the participants who took the survey. Completed survey(s) were then placed into a separate manila envelope. Participants were then provided an answer key upon completion of the survey. Each participant's survey was scored based on the percentage of correctly identified safe and harmful foods. Participants were then divided into two subgroups: type of pet and whether or not human food was fed to the pet. I also calculated each food's percentage of correct identification. The data collected did not support the original hypothesis. On average, the 72 dog owners that were surveyed scored 59.8%. On average the 35 cat owners that were surveyed scored 50.7%. These findings lead me to conclude that pet owners need to become more knowledgeable on what they can or cannot feed their animal. Many pet owners were uncertain of what foods were safe or harmful to feed their pet.