



Pet Diet Changes While Taking an Animal Nutrition Course

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Abstract

Animal nutrition courses are designed to explore the functions, digestion processes, and metabolism of common nutrients present in an animal’s diet. These courses cover various topics, including nutritional requirements, dietary choices, and potential health implications.

This study investigates the impact of an animal nutrition course on pet owners during the Fall of 2023. The primary objective is to determine how a pet owner's perception of their pet's diet changes and to identify any corresponding alterations made to the pet's diet before and while taking an animal nutrition course. Two surveys were conducted to collect responses: the pre-survey received 18 responses from animal nutrition students regarding their pets' diets before taking the course, and the post-survey received 18 responses from animal nutrition students regarding any changes in their pets' diets while taking the course.

The findings revealed that a majority of participants either made changes to their pets’ diet or felt an increased sense of knowledge and confidence in managing their pet's dietary needs. In contrast, a significant portion did not make changes to their pets’ diet. This suggests that while direct changes to pet diets may be limited, the educational experience positively influenced participants' perception and understanding of optimal pet nutrition. As the field evolves, this study contributes to the ongoing conversation surrounding how education and practical application come together in the always-changing area of animal nutrition.

Introduction

In recent years, the connection between education and pet care practices has attracted increasing attention within the field of animal nutrition. As pet owners seek to provide the best possible care for their animal companions, understanding the impact of formal education on pet dietary practices becomes crucial. This study, set in the Fall of 2023, aims to uncover the transformative influence of an animal nutrition course on pet owners' perceptions and behaviors regarding their pets' diets.

Animal nutrition courses are designed to explore the functions, digestion processes, and metabolism of common nutrients present in an animal’s diet. These courses cover various topics, including nutritional requirements, dietary choices, and potential health implications. The fall semester of 2023 provides a unique moment for this investigation. Through carefully constructed surveys administered both before and while taking an animal nutrition course, it aimed to explore not only the direct changes made to pets' diets but also the broader implications on pet owners' understanding and confidence in managing their pets' nutritional needs.

This exploration is particularly relevant as it contributes to the ongoing conversation surrounding how education and practical application come together in the always-changing area of animal nutrition. The study aims to help better understand how education and pet care are connected by providing valuable insights for both academic discussions and the broader community of pet caregivers.

Objective

The objective of this study is to determine how a pet owner's perception of their pet's diet changes and to identify any corresponding alterations made to the pet's diet before and while taking an animal nutrition course.

Materials and Methods

- Microsoft Forms was utilized to create surveys.
- Pre-survey was shared with the Fall 2023 Animal Nutrition class on September 14, 2023, and closed on September 19, 2023.
- Post-survey was shared with the Fall 2023 Animal Nutrition class on November 16, 2023, and closed on November 19, 2023.
- Microsoft Excel was used to create graphs to compare survey responses.
- Statistical program, R, was utilized to conduct McNemar’s Chi-Squared Test.
- Utilized initials provided by respondents to compare survey responses before and while taking an Animal Nutrition course.
- Pre- and Post-survey included 18 students taking animal nutrition.
- Respondents’ ages ranged between 21-22 years old on average.
- The most common major among respondents was Animal Science.

Results

Pet Type:

- Dog 46%
- Cat 30%
- Other 24% (including livestock animals)

Table 1. The change in proportion of food purchases (Post-survey vs Pre-survey) is not significant (p-value: 1).¹

		Pre-Survey	
		Purchased Food	Homemade Food
Post-Survey	Purchased Food	17	0
	Homemade Food	1	0

Table 2. The change in proportion of food type (Post survey vs Pre survey) is not significant (p-value: 1).¹

		Pre-Survey	
		Dry Food	Wet Food
Post-Survey	Dry Food	16	0
	Wet Food	1	1

1. McNemar’s Chi-Squared Test = 0 suggesting there is no difference and not enough evidence to conclude a significant difference between the paired groups (p-value = 1).

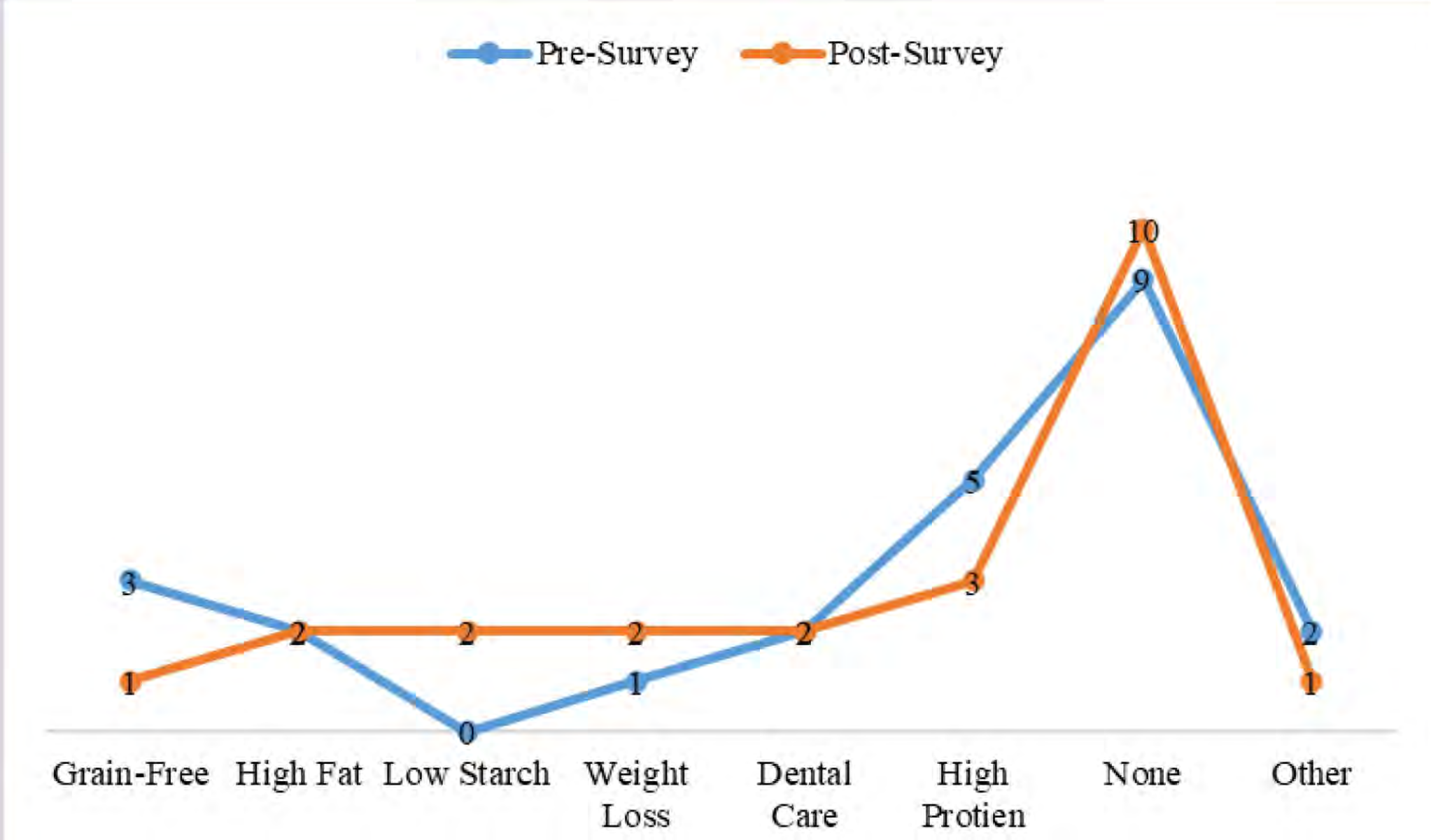


Figure 1. The chart portrays pet diet changes before and while taking an Animal Nutrition course.

Results

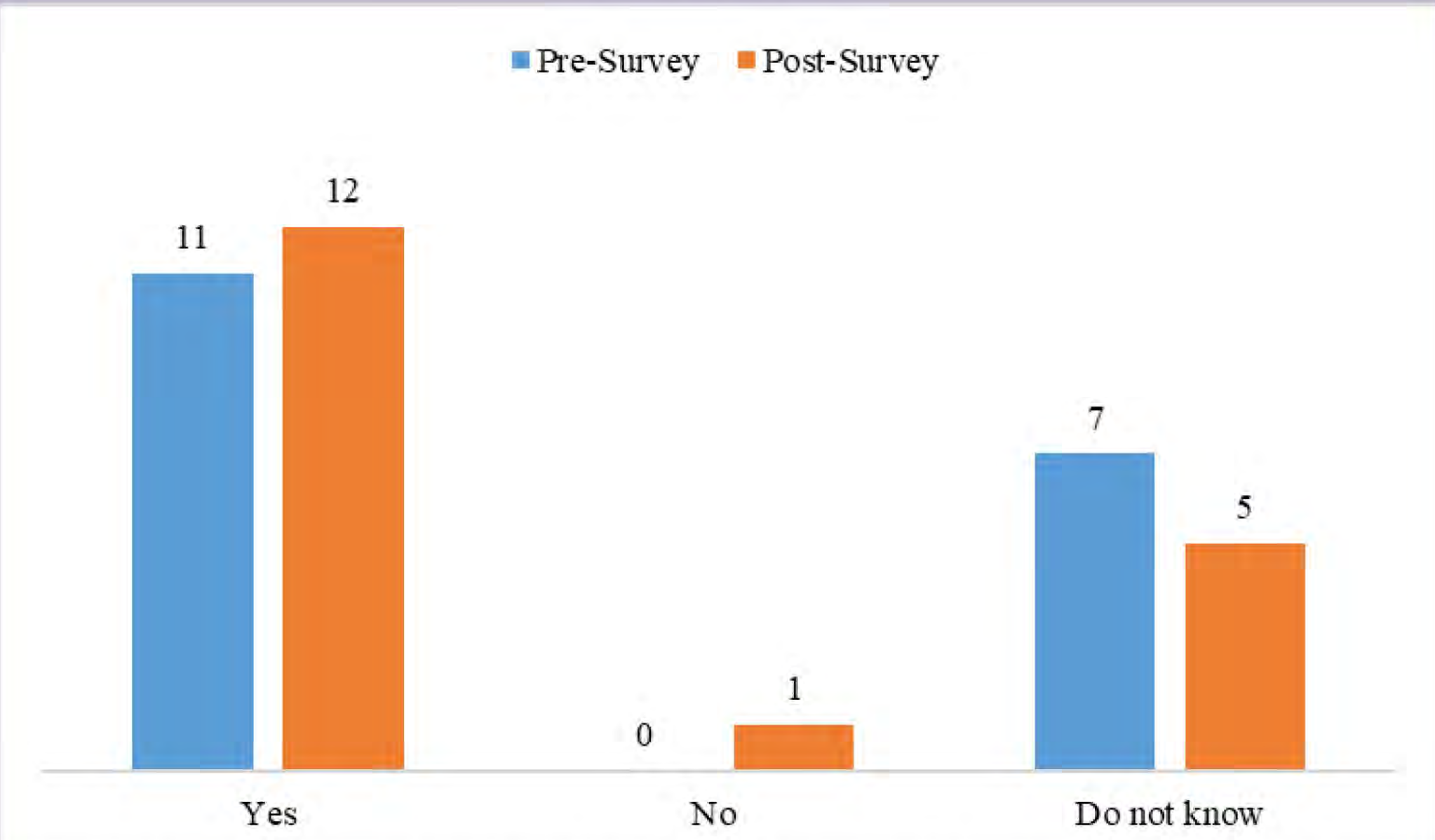


Figure 2. The chart portrays whether the surveyors’ pet’s diet meets the nutritional requirements before and while taking an Animal Nutrition course.

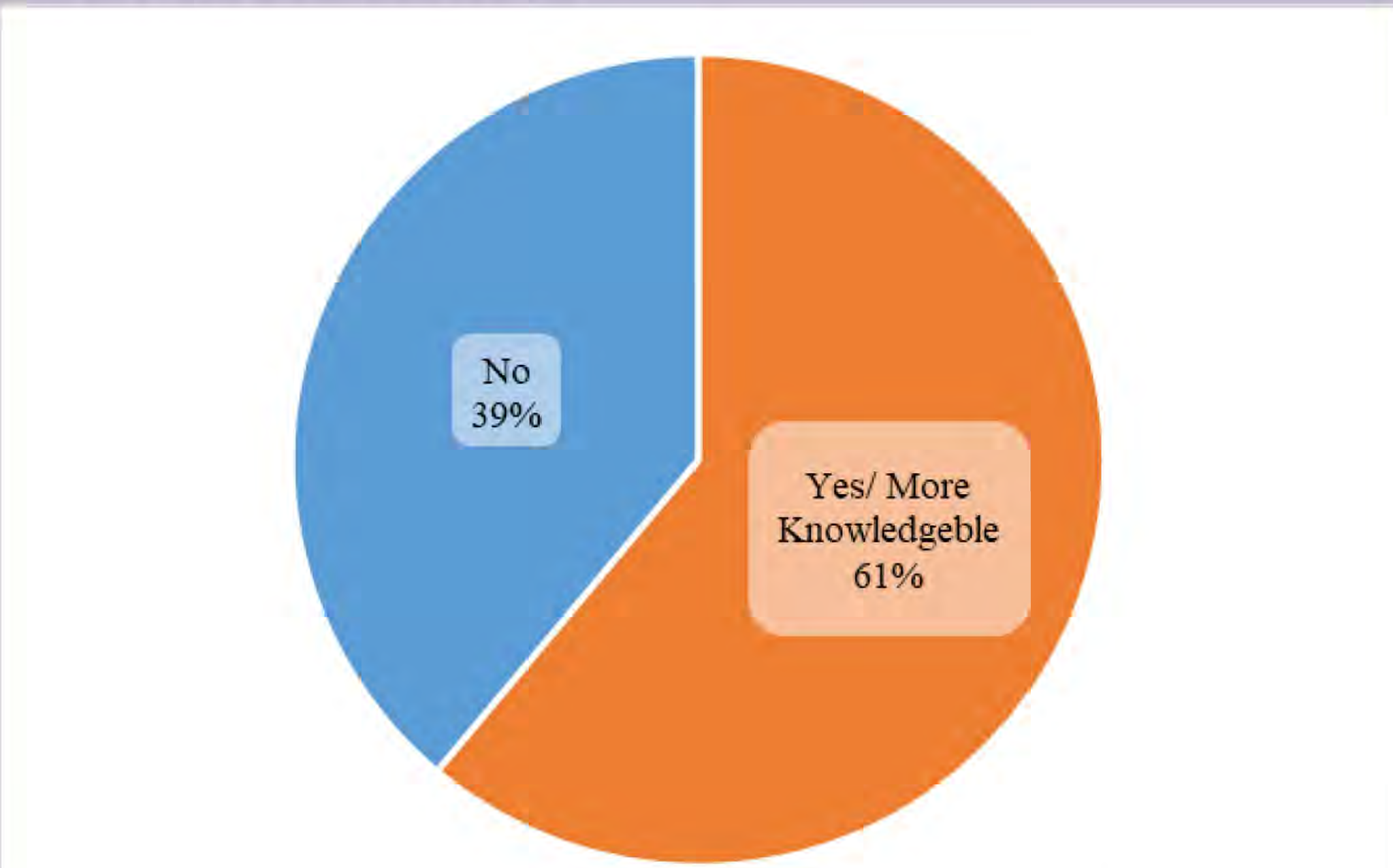


Figure 3. The chart portrays whether the surveyor changed their pet’s diet or found themselves to be more knowledgeable while taking an Animal Nutrition course (ME: +/-22.5%).

Summary

The findings revealed that a majority of participants either made changes to their pets’ diet or felt an increased sense of knowledge and confidence in managing their pet's dietary needs. In contrast, a significant portion did not make changes to their pets’ diet. This suggests that while direct changes to pet diets may be limited, the educational experience positively influenced participants' perception and understanding of optimal pet nutrition.

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