

IN CONVERSATION WITH CHELSIE ESTEY

SCIENCE AS THE COMMON LANGUAGE

OCTOBER 26-28, 2026 | BOSTON

SCIENCE AS THE COMMON LANGUAGE

In Conversation with Chelsie Estey, Chief Veterinary Officer, US, Hill's Pet Nutrition

Ahead of her appearance on the "Nutrition, Data and the Pet Owner: Building the Case for Clinical Nutrition in Practice" panel at AHNTI Boston, we sat down with Chelsie Estey, US Chief Veterinary Officer at Hill's Pet Nutrition, to talk about the unconventional path that led her from fish pharmacology to veterinary neurology to the top of one of the industry's most recognised science-led brands.

We covered the balancing act between scientific credibility and commercial strategy, where Hill's is placing its research focus, and why she believes nutrition remains one of the most underappreciated levers in companion animal health. Her Boston panel will dig further into the evidence base for therapeutic nutrition, how outcomes data can build the clinical case for it, and what a genuinely integrated nutrition strategy looks like inside a practice, and this conversation offers an early look at where her thinking sits on several of those questions.



Chelsie Estey, Chief Veterinary Officer, US, Hill's Pet Nutrition



NIAMH GALLAGHER

LEAD PRODUCER, AHNTI
KISACO RESEARCH

ON HER PATH INTO THE ROLE

Niamh: Could you describe your career journey and your path into this role?

Chelsie: If you'd asked me ten years ago what I'd be doing today, my answer wouldn't reflect where I've ended up. It's been a genuinely non-linear path. Before veterinary school, I was working in fish pharmacology and toxicology, and I went in thinking I'd become an aquaculture vet. A summer on the Atlantic salmon sea cages in a remote part of northern Canada taught me that wasn't the long-term path for me. I later did a couple of neurology externships and fell in love with it. I pursued board certification and spent time as a practicing neurologist in several different states. At that point, I asked myself what else I could do with that skill set. It was an uncomfortable question, but Elanco was launching a specialty business unit aimed at specialists like me, and I thought: this is a space I understand, let's give it a go. I started as a specialty consulting veterinarian, and later took on leadership of the specialty sales and vet teams. Following those roles, I joined a smaller pharmaceutical company where I had the opportunity to build out their pet health business from the ground up, which gave me exposure from manufacturing through to commercialisation. It's a non-traditional path for a veterinarian, but it showed me everything that's available in this industry once you're open to it.

ON ADVICE FOR NEWCOMERS

Niamh: What advice would you give to someone entering the industry today?

Chelsie: Be open to new experiences and willing to think outside the box about how you might leverage your skill set. Be willing to try things that make you uncomfortable, that's been my approach to every role. Veterinary training in particular sets you up for far more than clinical practice. If you can learn to treat everything from fish to elephants, you can learn marketing, sales, and finance too. It's about staying open as opportunities present themselves.

ON THE CVO ROLE, DAY TO DAY

Niamh: What does the Chief Veterinary Officer role actually look like day to day at Hill's?

Chelsie: One of the unique things about this role is that it means something different at every organisation. At Hill's, I love that no two days look the same. I get to work across R&D, marketing, sales, and our global teams, and I see myself as a translator between science and sales, helping shape how the science that's one of Hill's greatest strengths becomes a distinct commercial advantage. Ultimately, that means delivering science to the veterinary healthcare teams who shape the lives of pets and the people who care for them.

ON BRIDGING SCIENCE AND COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

Niamh: What are the key challenges in bridging the science function and the commercial side of the business?

Chelsie: I think of science and commercial strategy as two sides of the same coin rather than competing priorities. Science gives us credibility, efficacy, and trust; commercial strategy gives us reach and customer focus. The job is to blend those seamlessly, bringing commercially viable solutions that are also clinically undeniable, and using scientific rigour to solve the real problems a veterinarian faces the moment they walk into the room. When you do that, science becomes your greatest driver of sustainable revenue.

ON PROTECTING A SCIENCE-LED IDENTITY

Niamh: Hill's has a long history of clinical science-led positioning. How do you protect that identity as the nutrition category becomes more crowded and, in some cases, more marketing-driven?

Chelsie: The most important thing is staying true to who we are. We were founded by a veterinarian more than 75 years ago, and we've been a science-first company ever since. Our mission is crystal clear: to enrich and lengthen the special bond between people and their pets. Today we have nearly two hundred veterinarians, PhD scientists, veterinary nutritionists, and food scientists carrying that mission forward, which is what allows us to stay focused on bringing real science to veterinary professionals worldwide.

ON WHERE HILL'S IS INVESTING

Niamh: Where is Hill's placing its biggest bets over the next five years?

Chelsie: Building on what we've just discussed, science and the veterinary healthcare team remain at the core of everything we do. We're constantly researching and working to translate scientific discoveries into nutritional innovations for veterinarians, veterinary nurses, and pet parents worldwide. One area we're leading in is the microbiome. We believe we've only started to scratch the surface of how it affects a pet's overall health, and we see huge potential to bring that understanding to life through nutrition.

ON THE R&D AND FIELD FEEDBACK LOOP

Niamh: How closely does Hill's R&D work with practising vets today, and how has that relationship changed?

Chelsie: Our professional consulting veterinarians and territory managers are on the front lines, partnering daily with veterinary healthcare teams to understand the cases and challenges they're facing in the clinic. That feedback flows back into our R&D and commercial teams and helps drive innovation. It's a genuinely close partnership, critical to understanding what's happening at the clinic level in real time.

ON PET OWNER INFORMATION AND MISINFORMATION

Niamh: Pet owners are arriving in clinic with more information, and in some cases more misinformation, than ever before. How has that changed the nutrition conversation vets need to have?

Chelsie: One of the biggest challenges is time in the exam room. We help on two fronts: educating pet parents beforehand with science-backed information so they arrive with some understanding already in place, and equipping veterinary professionals with resources, including field support and conference resources, so they feel confident recommending the right product for

the right patient. It's about partnering with the veterinary team to guide that conversation, so pet parents can trust a science-backed company and vets have what they need to make that recommendation with confidence.

ON USEFUL DATA VERSUS NOISE

Niamh: Where do you draw the line between genuinely useful pet-owner-facing data and noise?

Chelsie: Pet parents want transparency. They want to understand the purpose and proof behind a product and to trust the company behind it. That's part of Hill's legacy as the #1 veterinarian-recommended brand in the US: we can substantiate our claims. Education is what turns that into trust, understanding why and how the nutrition is made, at both the veterinary healthcare team level and the pet parent level.

ON THE STRUCTURAL GAP BETWEEN SCIENCE AND THE ANIMAL

Niamh: What's the biggest structural gap you see between what nutritional science can do and what actually reaches the animal?

Chelsie: Compliance. Pets can be picky, and they have preferences around format, part of why we recently entered the fresh food market. The best therapeutic or wellness food is only effective if the pet is actually eating it, so we balance consumer preferences with functional ingredients that all serve a specific purpose. Consumer trends come and go, but our nutritional philosophy doesn't change: science is the best path to giving pets the best possible care, and giving pet parents format options helps drive the compliance that ultimately benefits the pet.

ON NUTRITION'S PLACE IN THE WIDER INDUSTRY

Niamh: We've seen significant investment in biotech, particularly on the therapeutic side. Does nutrition get enough attention as a lever for outcomes?

Chelsie: One of the biggest hurdles is simply getting people to think about nutrition, whether as a first-line management option or as part of a multimodal approach to a specific disease. We tackle that through education, but there's still work to do with both veterinary healthcare teams and pet parents. Nutrition is relevant in one hundred per cent of pets, one hundred per cent of the time. They all have to eat and that presents a huge opportunity. It highlights how much room as an industry we have to grow to close an awareness gap on how we position nutrition in every patient conversation.

"Nutrition is relevant in one hundred per cent of pets, one hundred per cent of the time."

JOIN US AT AHNTI 2026

AHNTI US returns to Boston, October 26-28 2026.

Now spanning the full animal health value chain: from discovery and development through to the delivery of care, AHNTI US brings together the founders, investors, scientists, veterinary leaders, and strategists shaping the future of animal health. From biopharma and diagnostics to nutrition, technology, and the business of veterinary care, this is where the ecosystem connects.

Whether you are bringing a product to market, looking to fuel your pipeline, investing in the next wave of innovation, or navigating how care is delivered on-farm and in clinic, AHNTI 2026 is where the conversations that matter happen.

FIND OUT MORE AND REGISTER YOUR INTEREST AT [AHNTI-US.COM](https://ahnti-us.com)

LOOKING AHEAD TO BOSTON

Chelsie Estey's outlook, that science and commercial strategy are two sides of the same coin, and that nutrition's biggest barrier is awareness rather than evidence, is a fitting preview of the conversation she'll continue on stage at AHNTI Boston.

Her panel, "Nutrition, Data and the Pet Owner," will push further into questions this interview only begins to touch: how outcomes data can make nutrition's clinical case measurable, how practices should be meeting pet owner demand for nutrition-led solutions, and how the category communicates value as direct-to-consumer competition grows. It's a natural next chapter for a conversation that starts with awareness and ends with proof.



AHNTI US 2026

AHNTI US 2026 takes place October 26-28 in Boston, bringing together 500+ leaders across animal health, nutrition, and technology. The nutrition track brings the evidence base for clinical nutrition into the room with the veterinary leaders, data teams, and commercial strategists who decide how it reaches the patient.

FIND OUT MORE AND REGISTER YOUR INTEREST AT [AHNTI-US.COM](https://ahnti-us.com)