

Obesity in Pets

One of the fastest growing problems in Veterinary Medicine is obesity in pets. As owner's lives have become busier; the time allotment for pets has decreased. Fortunately, there are now ways to help combat this problem and still allow owners to keep up with their normal lives.

First and foremost, diet and exercise are the best ways to help a pet lose weight. However, nobody has time to exercise their dogs three hours a day like they need. There are some low calorie/high fiber food options that restrict the caloric intake, but do not make the dog/cat think they are on a diet. I recommend Purina OM (overweight management) to help reduce the calories and aid in weight loss. Purina has developed a feeding schedule that takes into consideration the pet's weight and body condition score. A body condition score is a body sizing chart based on a 1-9 scale with 4-5 being the ideal size. The daily feeding guide recommends how much to feed and also suggests how many treats can be fed. It includes a treat suggestion page for the owner to use. The program works on a monthly weigh-in cycle that allows the owner to adjust the food amount each month until the ideal weight is reached and then the maintenance amount of food can be established. Throughout this process exercise is recommended to aid in the weight loss.

If weight loss is not accomplished with diet and exercise, there are other avenues to pursue, so do not lose hope. Obesity can also be a sign of other underlying diseases such as hypothyroidism or hypoadrenocorticism (Cushing's disease). To determine if your pet has any of these diseases, blood work is needed for diagnosis. Once blood work has been performed and your pet has been diagnosed, appropriate medication will be prescribed. Over time, the weight should decrease with help of diet and exercise.

Having tried diet and exercise and determined that your pet does not have any underlying disease for obesity, there is a new product on the market that could help. This new product, Slentrol, helps reduce the pet's appetite, therefore helping the pet lose weight. It works by blocking the food uptake mechanism; therefore the dogs think they are full. In order to work successfully, the owner needs to retrain themselves on how to correctly feed and exercise the pets. This drug does not have lasting effects, therefore, (here it is again) diet and exercise are very important in maintaining the pet's new physique. Unfortunately, this drug is only available for dogs.

By keeping your pet fit and trim, they will live a longer, happier life. Many diseases such as diabetes and secondary hip pain may be prevented by keeping your pet at a healthy weight.

If you have any questions, please ask your veterinarian and find out which weight loss program will benefit your pet the most.

Tips to determine if your pet is overweight:

- 1) Cannot feel ribs
- 2) Body looks like tube with no waist, no hour-glass figure (top view)
- 3) Heavy fat deposits over hips and by tail base
- 4) “pudgy abdomen” (side view)

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