

# Obesity Management In Dogs and Cats

Did you know that the number one disease in dogs and cats is obesity? Nearly 40% of all pets are medically obese. Obesity is when they are at least 15% over their recommended body weight. On a 10 pound cat that can be as little as 1 1/2 pounds. That may not sound like much but on their small frame it is very significant. It would be like an adult human male gaining upwards of 30 pounds.



## What causes obesity?

Simply put, obesity occurs when more calories are consumed on a daily basis than our pet uses during that same time. The excessive calories could be the result of simply feeding too much food, giving too many biscuits, feeding table scraps, or a pet that scavenges around the neighborhood for food.

## How can just 3 or 4 biscuits a day cause Fluffy to get so heavy?

Think about the treats you feed your dog or cat on a monthly/yearly basis. 4 biscuits (or Pounce Cat Treats) daily is 120 monthly and over 1400 on an annual basis. It is easy to see how a cat could gain 4 or 5 pounds yearly given all the extra calories in those treats.



## How can I tell if my dog or cat is overweight?

The most effective method to determine if your dog is overweight is to feel for their ribs. Gently rub your finger tips over the dogs chest wall. You should easily feel each individual rib. Now follow that rib as it arches towards the middle of your dogs back. If you can't feel the ribs then Fido is a little chubby. On cats, check to see if they have a fat pad between their rear legs. Some are so big that they actually drag the floor. If your cat has a large fat pad then you'd better put them on a diet. (The average cat should weigh roughly 10 pounds.)

## Why is an overweight pet a medical concern?

Obesity is associated with increased risk to several medical conditions including: diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and musculoskeletal (hips & backs) dysfunction. Likewise the obese pet is more prone to heat stroke, gastrointestinal disease, liver disease, dermatological problems, and reproductive disorders. In addition they are at greater risk when anesthetized for surgical procedures.

# Obesity Continued...

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## OK, so my pet is overweight. What can I do about it?

I feel like he is hungry all the time. If I cut back on his food won't that make matters worse? In most cases you can just cut back on the quantity of food your pet gets. While it will cut down on their weight, their attitude and behavior changes will likely cause them to have medical problems! What the overweight pet needs is a nutritionally complete diet that satisfies their need for bulk without all the calories. A diet high in non-digestible fiber is usually recommended for weight loss in pets. It's just like humans eating salad. Generally, you can continue feeding your pet the same quantity of a diet food and still see weight loss.

## Other than changing the diet, what else can be done to keep my pet from getting obese?

If there are no physical problems with your pet, then anything you can do to increase their level of exercise will be a big help. Daily jogs or walks are great ways to increase the dogs metabolic rate and burn calories. Just make sure you start out slowly and give both you and your dog a chance to work into the daily exercise routine. You can encourage your cat to chase toys around the house or take them for leashed walks through the neighborhood.

## How long will it take to get the weight off of my pet?

Remember that it took months to years to put the extra weight on and it will likely take several months to get it off. Slow and steady is the name of the game. Crash diets or other weight loss schemes. They just don't work. We will be happy to give you an estimate of the appropriate weight loss per week for your pet. (You are welcome to use our scales any time!)

## The Overweight Pet Quiz

How difficult is it to feel your dog's ribs when you run your hands over its sides?

- Difficult -- 3
- Fairly Easily -- 1
- Very Easy -- 0

Does your cat have a "pouch" that hangs down in front of its rear legs?

- Yes -- 3
- No -- 0

How much daily exercise does your pet get?

- Little to None -- 2
- < 30 Minutes -- 1
- > 30 Minutes -- 0

Has your pet been spayed or neutered?

- Yes -- 1
- No -- 0

How often do you or a family member give your pet treats, snacks or table scraps?

- Multiple Times -- 2
- Once a day -- 1
- Rarely -- 0

Have you ever tried to get your pet to lose weight before with little or no success?

- Yes -- 2
- No -- 0

Have you, members of your family or other friends mentioned that your pet is overweight?

- Yes -- 1
- No -- 0

**If your pet scored 4 or above they may be overweight. Please have one of our veterinarians discuss with you the benefits of a weight control program.**

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