

The Overweight Pet

Why is Obesity a Problem?

Mobility

An increase in the weight loading on the joints and vertebral column will accelerate the onset of degenerative joint disease, with discomfort leading to immobility resulting in muscle wastage and further immobility. The extra work required to move the obese animal may also cause breathlessness and reluctance to exercise.

Heart and Circulation

If your pet is overweight, its heart has to do more work. It is likely therefore that vital organs, muscles, joints etc. have poorer circulation with a consequent shorter life.

Skin

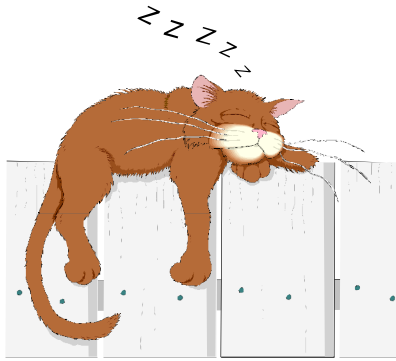
Changes in skin oils and excretions, may allow skin infection resulting in greasiness and scaling (seborrhoea), or spots and sores (pyoderma). The obese animal may also be unable to groom itself effectively, allowing hair mats to cover its bad skin.

Internal Organs

If your pet is overweight, then there will be fat deposited in or around many organs. This may lead to poor organ function, and in particular liver failure and diabetes.

Why do our Animals put on Weight?

Obesity is always due to overfeeding. The old concept that pets only eat what they need is clearly wrong, or there would be no obesity. We overfeed



for the following reasons:

1. Feeding on demand rewards demanding behaviour increasing demand.
2. Feeding guides on packaging usually overstate. Food requirement is governed by many factors: age, sex - particularly neutering -breed, exercise. Manufacturers cannot afford to have pets malnourished on their diets.
3. Feeding what appears the "right amount" is also often wrong, many is the owner of an obese who, when asked how much their obese pet eats, replies "only one small meal".

Recognising Obesity

Generally you should be able to feel individual ribs and vertebral spines with *light* finger pressure only. If it takes more, you pet is overweight, if ribs and backbone are clearly visible, it is likely underweight. In addition:

1. An adult cat should weigh between 4-5 kg
2. The presence of a hanging pouch between the back legs of a cat is excess fat.
3. A pet should have a "waist" when standing and viewed from above.
4. The line of a dog's abdomen should rise from the back of the chest to the pelvis when standing.
5. Bringing your pet to us allows us to assess the percentage overweight - 10% is mild, 30% is obese.

Obesity is always due to overfeeding. The idea that pets only eat what they need is clearly wrong, since so many pets are overweight.

There are a few important points to recognise:

1. An overweight animal has a high metabolic rate "wasting" calories. Dieting results in an initial wt loss

Dieting your Pet

then the metabolic rate adjusts conserving calories and slowing the weight loss.

2. Animals on diets should not have food left down for more than a few minutes, anything left should be picked up. If you have more than one animal, they should not swap bowls.
3. Higher palatability diets tend to be higher calorie diets.
4. "Fussy" eaters may only be demonstrating the few calories they need. Feeding tastier foods in an effort to make a pet eat more may overcome the pet's normal appetite.
5. You are entirely in control of your pet's weight. Diets take resolve and perseverance and need monitoring continuously to be maintained.

Once it is decided to diet your pet, we will assess the target weight, the diet to be fed and period over which to run. We will then ask you to return for weighing regularly to ensure an appropriate weight loss and acceptance of the diet.

Name:

Date:

Feeding a "prescription" low calorie pet food provides a balanced diet of known energy value without the need to cut the quantity fed.

