



### Overweight Animals

#### Overweight Animals-why it's a problem










One of the biggest issues we see at our Veterinary clinic is overweight animals. At least 1 in 4 animals that walk through our doors are overweight. This is a big problem as we want your pets to be happy and healthy for as long as possible, and overweight animals have an increased risk for a range of problems including:

- Arthritis/joint problems
- Prolapsed (slipped) discs
- Anaesthetic and surgical risks
- Heat and exercise intolerance, (particularly heat stroke on hot days)
- Heart disease and respiratory disease
- Cancer (particularly mammary tumours in entire females)
- ruptured ligaments-or other orthopedic conditions/lameness due to excess strain on joints
- Diabetes.
- Poor skin and coat quality
- Lower immunity
- A shorter life expectancy










#### How to tell if your animal is overweight

Some signs that your animal is overweight is that you cannot feel their ribs, they lack a curve between their ribs and their hips, their collar may need loosening often, they find it very hard to keep cool on hot days and pant excessively, they find walking more difficult or they are more bad tempered than they used to be. The chart below can help give you an indication of what condition your animal is in

**BODY CONDITION SYSTEM**

TOO THIN	1	Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.		1
	2	Ribs, lumbar vertebrae and pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some evidence of other bony prominence. Minimal loss of muscle mass.		2
	3	Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.		3
IDEAL	4	Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.		4
	5	Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.		5
TOO HEAVY	6	Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernible viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.		6
	7	Ribs palpable with difficulty; heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be present.		7
	8	Ribs not palpable under very heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present.		8
	9	Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.		9

**BODY CONDITION SYSTEM**

TOO THIN	1	Ribs visible on shorthaired cats; no palpable fat; severe abdominal tuck; lumbar vertebrae and wings of ilia easily palpated.		1
	2	Ribs easily visible on shorthaired cats; lumbar vertebrae obvious with minimal muscle mass; pronounced abdominal tuck; no palpable fat.		2
	3	Ribs easily palpable with minimal fat covering; lumbar vertebrae obvious; obvious waist behind ribs; minimal abdominal fat.		3
IDEAL	4	Ribs palpable with minimal fat covering; noticeable waist behind ribs; slight abdominal tuck; abdominal fat pad absent.		4
	5	Well-proportioned; observe waist behind ribs; ribs palpable with slight fat covering; abdominal fat pad minimal.		5
TOO HEAVY	6	Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering; waist and abdominal fat pad distinguishable but not obvious; abdominal tuck absent.		6
	7	Ribs not easily palpated with moderate fat covering; waist poorly discernible; obvious rounding of abdomen; moderate abdominal fat pad.		7
	8	Ribs not palpable with excess fat covering; waist absent; obvious rounding of abdomen with prominent abdominal fat pad; fat deposits present over lumbar area.		8
	9	Ribs not palpable under heavy fat cover; heavy fat deposits over lumbar area, face and limbs; distention of abdomen with no waist; extensive abdominal fat deposits.		9

## **How to help them lose weight successfully**

There are 3 main keys to the success of your pet's weight loss. Your motivation, diet and exercise. With any weight loss program the aim is to lose the weight and keep it off. Weigh your pet now and work out their optimum/ideal weight. Initially your target weight should be 15% of their current weight. If further weight loss is required then once the first target has been achieved, set to lose 15% again. Take a photo before you start so at the end you can see the progress.

1. **Motivation:** After all you are in control of what your animal eats and how much exercise they receive. Without your determination to succeed your pet will not successfully lose weight.
2. **Diet:** What your animal eats is a major part of losing weight. Strict diets must be adhered to.
  - No table scraps or fatty treats. Where possible avoid giving your pet snacks as most human nibbles given to pets are quite fatty. For example giving 1 small biscuit to a 10kg dog is like us eating a chocolate bar or a hamburger. Giving 1 cup of milk to a 4.5kg cat is like 5 chocolate bars, or 4 hamburgers.
  - They will need a low calorie diet initially.
  - They must ONLY be fed a specific low calorie food.
  - You will need to work out (with the help of your vet) a daily feeding plan-how much they should be fed in total per day.
  - Divide the daily food into 2 feeds (sometimes 3 feeds).
  - Gradually change to any new pet food over a 4 days period
  - Ensure only 1 person is in charge of feeding your pet
  - Remove any uneaten food after 10-15 mins
  - Avoid feeding large meals on a night
  - Weight loss foods we recommend are
    - Hills r/d, w/d or m/d
    - Eukanuba restricted calorie
    - Iams weight control
    - Royal Canin –weight & osteo, Stones & weight, weight & kidney.
    - Advance light
  - Each animal is different and some foods will work better in certain animals. Work with our staff to figure out which food best suits your pet.

### **Rewarding your pet**

- Where possible reward your pet with things other than snacks or food. This can be done with:
- Praise and attention-Animals love attention-so give them more when they do something good. For a lot of animals it's as good as if not better than food rewards
- Fun and games-play games with your pet, they love interaction with their owners
- Walks-they always love these
- Massage-a relaxing and healthy way to reward your pet-ask at the clinic for the best areas!!
- If you are using snacks use healthy snacks and ensure that they are included in the daily food intake-do not give as well as the daily food allowance. Healthy low calorie snacks include some of their normal diet, Eukanuba low calorie treats, 1/4 cup of carrot, 1/4 cup green beans, 1/4 apple, 1/4 rice cake, 1/2 fat free wheat cracker.

### **3. Exercise:**

- Take every opportunity to take your animal for a walk or play a game. It is important if your animal has not been active for a while to improve their fitness (they get unfit just like us)
- Good games to get cats moving are 'catch the light' getting them to chase a light reflection, letting your cat play with a box or paper bag, or other toys such as mice
- For dogs walks are always a good idea, fetch-throwing a ball (do not use a stick-this can cause other injuries). This is a good game as long as your animal has good joints-if any leg problems we will not recommend this-talk to your vet about whether this game is suitable for your pet. Hide and seek (hiding a toy or some kibble for your dog to find), jogging and cycling-good for you and your dog, swimming or hydrotherapy-ideal for dogs with arthritis or back problems. Ask your practice for advice about hydrotherapy.
- For animals about 30 mins of exercise per day is ideal, for older pets divide this into 10 minute sessions

### **Summary**

It is not an easy task helping your animal lose weight but is very rewarding. Not only will they be healthier but most take on a attitude and are more active. You must be strict in your nutrition and exercise and perseverance is the key. If you are having trouble with helping your pet lose weight and need help making a plan or want to find out if they are overweight we are here to help and make sure you ask us about our weight loss program.