



DANADA VETERINARY HOSPITAL, P.C.

## Weight Management

Recent studies show that nearly 60% of the pet population is overweight or obese. This alarming statistic means that over half of our pets are at increased risk of many health problems ranging from degenerative joint diseases (arthritis), respiratory illness, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, urinary tract disease and many other illnesses. They are also at higher risk for anesthetic complication and are statistically more likely to have a shorter life expectancy than fit animals.

A healthy diet and exercise are of equal importance to animals with regards to proper weight control. The following tips information is aimed at providing guidance for pet owners whose pets are currently dealing with excess weight.

### ***Dietary Factors in Managing Weight Loss***

While some animals can lose weight by restricting the intake of their regular diets, the only diets that are specifically designed for the purpose of weight loss are prescription diets. Over the counter “Light,” “Low Calorie,” or “Weight Control” diets are designed for helping overweight animals not gain more, or for helping those that have lost extra weight keep the weight off. They are lower in caloric content, but they are built for maintaining body weight rather than fueling loss, and therefore have normal protein and fiber content. On the contrary, prescription weight loss diets not only reduce caloric content per serving, but they are fortified with increased levels of protein and fiber to full metabolism and satisfy appetite.

#### ***Protein Content:***

Dietary protein is vital for fueling everyday functions. It provides energy and helps maintain and build lean muscle. When the body is deficient in protein, metabolism is slowed in favor of retaining muscle mass. This means that simply restricting caloric intake without enough fuel from protein results in many animals keeping their excess weight on rather than burning muscle.

The higher level of protein in prescription weight loss diets aims to prevent this phenomenon. Both canned and dry prescription diets have vastly more protein per serving than traditional over-the-counter maintenance diets. However, if you attempt weight loss with an over-the-counter diet, it is important to note that canned diets or moist foods contain higher levels of protein than their dry counterparts. That makes canned diets good options for some overweight animals.

Note: The percentage of protein in animal diets is reported on the label as a percentage of the product’s overall weight rather than based on the dry matter protein in the food. Therefore, when reading labels, some math must be used to calculate the dry matter protein content of the food.

Considering the following example using two hypothetical diets:

A dry diet has 2% moisture and 30% protein according to the label.

A wet food of the same brand has 80% moisture and 7% protein according to the label.

The dry matter protein content of the foods is calculated as:

The % of Protein on label / (100%-% moisture)

With the above examples:

The dry food would contain  $30 / (100-2) = 30.6\%$  dry matter protein

The wet diet would contain  $10 / (100-80) = 50\%$  dry matter protein

If you can remain below the caloric intake appropriate for your pet's weight loss, dietary protein can be increased to as much as your pet can handle without developing signs of illness and while. Too much protein can cause flatulence, constipation, and diarrhea. Cats tolerate higher levels of protein than dogs do. There are some health conditions in which too much protein in the diet can be detrimental, so you should always consult your veterinarian before starting a weight loss program.

### ***Caloric Content***

Counting calories is the most obvious factor in reducing weight. Calorie needs are determined by many factors, but chief among them is the resting energy requirement (RER) for your pet. RER is the resting metabolism for an animal based on their ideal body condition. Depending on age and activity level, the caloric needs of a patient can exceed RER, but for weight loss, it is recommended that overweight dogs stick to the RER level for their target weight, and cats reduce caloric intake to 80% of their target weight's RER. A chart for your pet's RER levels can be found at the end of this handout.

If weight reduction goals are extreme (>20% of body weight), it is sometimes better to set a goal for 50% improvement at first, then establish secondary goals once progress is made. This ensures that patients get enough calories to maintain comfort with their new diet plan.

For example, a 100lb dog who needs to lose 20lb to be ideal, might do better if the initial calorie restriction is calculated for a 90lb dog.

### ***Fiber Content***

Extra fiber in the diet is primarily meant to help make animals feel fuller faster. It helps animals better tolerate reduction in food volume without reservation. Dietary fiber also counterbalances the extra protein in the diet to help animals maintain more regular bowel habits. Dietary fiber is built into prescription diets as previously mentioned, but it can also be achieved by adding it in small amounts to regular food.

## ***Other Dieting Tips***

**Avoid free feeding your pets**-Most animals will overeat if they are permitted to do so. For grazing pets, you can measure out a daily amount and leave it in the bowl for them, but the bowl should not be refilled until the following day.

**Feed pets separately**-In multi-animal households, each pet should be fed separately. Overweight individuals should always be restricted from access to other pets' dishes. This is best accomplished by picking up dishes immediately after meals, feeding one animal behind a closed door or gate, or feeding in separate areas of the house. For grazing animals, a creep feeder system can be employed, in which an overweight or larger animal is denied access to a smaller animal's food by installing a gate or door that only the smaller pet can fit through. There are also feeding systems that will only open based on a radiofrequency controlled by a pet's collar. These feeders help ensure only the designated animal can eat out of their bowl.

**Minimize table scraps and treats**-A healthy diet consists of at least 90% pet food, and no more than 10% treats. All food has calories, and the difference between a 10 lb. animal and a 12 lb. animal is only about thirty-five calories per day. Therefore, an extra treat per day could be the one thing that prevents your pet from losing weight.

**Special consideration in homes with small children**- In households with small children, animals should be crated or have access to the dinner table restricted at times when humans are eating. If children wish to feed their pets, the measured amount of daily food/treats should be placed in a plastic bag in the morning. Children should then be instructed that their pet can only have food that comes from that bag. Once it is gone, the pet will have to wait until the following day for more.

**Diet "Hack" for minor weight loss** - In animals that need to lose only a small percentage of weight a modest reduction in dietary volume may be all it takes. If your pet does not appreciate being fed less, an equal volume of fiber-rich food such as green beans can be added to the diet to help improve fullness. A ¼ cup reduction of food reduces calories by about one hundred calories. ¼ cup of green beans adds in only about 10-15 calories.

## ***The Importance of Exercise***

The more active a pet is, the easier he or she will drop unwanted pounds. However, most overweight pets are couch potatoes by choice or as a result of the excess weight they carry around. Therefore, physical activity must be encouraged as part of the weight loss program. *\*All foods used as part of an exercise routine must come from the designated diet plan above.*

### **Dogs:**

Frequent short walks may be more tolerable than a 1-2 mile walk each day if your pet is overweight.

Play 'find it' games with dog food to encourage both physical and mental stimulation. Food dispensing balls or toys also provide mental stimulation and encourage physical movement.

Play gentle games of fetch with your dog if they like to chase toys or balls.

Swimming is a great low impact way to exercise animals that have joint problems.

### **Cats:**

Place food in bowls throughout the house, or at different heights to encourage climbing and movement.

Cat specific food dispensing balls or toys are also available

Use a laser pointer, ball or wind-up toy to get your cat to play chase.

Any mentally stimulating toy such as a feather on a sting will keep your cat's mind stimulated and therefore prevent them from thinking about eating.

Take your cat for a walk on a harness

### ***How Quickly Should You Expect Results?***

Healthy weight loss is a gradual process that takes months and sometimes years to achieve. Ideal weight loss for dogs is 0.5-2% per week or 3-10% per month. While having too much weight is detrimental to health, losing too fast can be as well.

Pets should be weighed approximately every 2-4 weeks. If weight loss is not occurring as desired, adjustments in diet or caloric restriction can be made based on your veterinarian's judgement. For accuracy, animals should be weighed consistently on the same scale. The results of weigh-ins can be recorded in your own journal or shared with us to include in your medical record. Clients are encouraged to stop in to stop into the office whenever they want.

Kcal per day based on Resting Energy Requirement (RER)=70\*kg<sup>0.75</sup>

lbs	RER	lbs	RER	lbs	RER	lbs	RER	lbs	RER	lbs	RER
1	39	26	446	51	740	76	997	101	1235	126	1457
2	65	27	459	52	750	77	1007	102	1244	127	1466
3	88	28	472	53	761	78	1017	103	1253	128	1475
4	110	29	484	54	772	79	1027	104	1262	129	1483
5	130	30	497	55	783	80	1037	105	1271	130	1492
6	149	31	509	56	793	81	1046	106	1280	131	1500
7	167	32	521	57	804	82	1056	107	1289	132	1509
8	184	33	534	58	814	83	1066	108	1298	133	1518
9	201	34	546	59	825	84	1075	109	1307	134	1526
10	218	35	558	60	835	85	1085	110	1316	135	1535
11	234	36	570	61	846	86	1094	111	1325	136	1543
12	250	37	581	62	856	87	1104	112	1334	137	1552
13	265	38	593	63	867	88	1113	113	1343	138	1560
14	280	39	605	64	877	89	1123	114	1352	139	1569
15	295	40	616	65	887	90	1132	115	1361	140	1577
16	310	41	628	66	897	91	1142	116	1370	145	1619
17	324	42	639	67	907	92	1151	117	1379	150	1661
18	339	43	651	68	918	93	1160	118	1387	155	1702
19	353	44	662	69	928	94	1170	119	1396	160	1743
20	366	45	673	70	938	95	1179	120	1405	165	1784
21	380	46	684	71	948	96	1188	121	1414	170	1824
22	394	47	696	72	958	97	1198	122	1422	175	1864
23	407	48	707	73	968	98	1207	123	1431	180	1904
24	420	49	718	74	978	99	1216	124	1440	185	1944
25	433	50	729	75	988	100	1225	125	1449	190	1983

Feline Requirements

- Neutered Adult = 1.2\*RER
- Intact Adult = 1.4\*RER
- Obese Prone Adult = 1\*RER
- Sr Pet = 1\*RER
- For Wt Loss = 0.8\*RER**
- Critical Care = 1\*RER
- Kitten = 2.5\*RER
- Active Adult = 1.6\*RER
- Gestation = 1.6-2\*RER
- Lactation = 2-6\*RER or FC

Canine Requirements

- Neutered Adult = 1.6\*RER
- Intact Adult = 1.8\*RER
- Obese Prone Adult = 1.4\*RER
- For Weight Loss = RER**
- Sr = 1-1.2\*RER
- Critical Care = 1\*RER
- Pup = 3\*RER for 4 mo, then 2\*RER
- Lt Work = 2\*RER
- Mod Work = 3 \*RER
- Heavy Work = 4-8\*RER
- Gestation = 1.8\*RER for 42 days, then 3\*RER
- Lactation = 4-8\*RER or Free Choice

**\*\*\*Always calculate based on ideal weight**