

DAVIES

The Veterinary Specialists

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Maintaining a healthy weight for our pets

Our guide to helping your pet maintain a healthy diet and body weight.

Keeping body weight within ideal limits has varied and far ranging benefits to our pets. Christmas is a time of excess, often for us and our pets. Our pets are dependent on us for their meals and treats, therefore we must have a clear understanding of the rations we provide and the impact these have on our pets lives.



What are the impacts of excess body fat?

Excess fat is associated with a wide range of small animal diseases. Obesity increases strain on the heart, lungs, muscles, joints, tendons and ligaments, making moving around much more taxing on the body.

Obese pets often have;

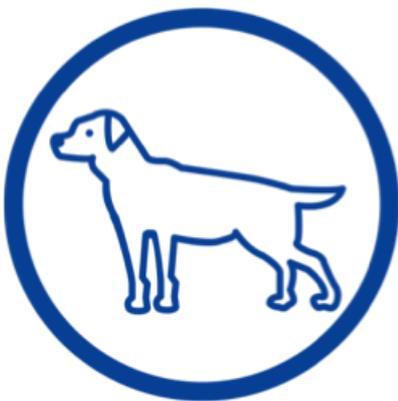
- Reduced exercise tolerance
- Increased risk of musculoskeletal injury
- Exacerbation of osteoarthritic changes and inflammatory reactions
- More frequent difficulty with general mobility

Individuality

Our pets are all individuals, so when selecting and providing food for them we must consider:

- **Innate food types consumed:** Cats are carnivores consuming only meat, whereas dogs are omnivores meaning their natural diet contains some fruits and vegetables
- **The quantity and type of food:** Different food types have varied energy density. For example; working dog foods would provide an energy dense diet which may lead to weight gain in a sedentary dog
- **Body condition score** (body fat)
- **Specific requirements** for health (allergies etc;)
- **Balance and completeness** of the food

The food you then select and provide for your pet should be appropriate to its needs.



Calories for pets

Calories are a universal measure of energy consumption and apply to our pets too. Unfortunately, it is much more difficult to estimate the calories required by our pets daily as this varies with a number of variables such as age, activity level, neutered status and pre-existing diseases/disorders.

Estimating your pet's body condition score and using this against their current food intake can help you to decide if you need to increase or reduce their feed.

Condition scoring

Condition scoring uses either a 1-5 or 1-9 scale and is used to determine the fat covering of your dog or cat.

The scale describes specific markers to feel and look for in an underweight (1-2), ideal (3 or 5) or overweight animal (4-5 or 8-9). Using this scale to assess your pet can allow you to reduce, maintain or increase your pet's daily intake to achieve the ideal body condition.



How do you reduce your pet's body weight?

There are many ways to reduce your pet's body weight:

- Gradual increase in activity levels – ensure you do this slowly and in small bursts
- Reducing number of food rewards/ dental chews
- Reducing meal ration provided
- Utilising weight management diets, therefore reducing calorie content of each meal

Before deciding on how to reduce body weight, we recommend you have a conversation with your pet's veterinary surgeon or veterinary physiotherapist. They can help in planning the best approach to take and help monitor the weight to map your pet's progress. Often a combination of approaches will reduce body weight safely and effectively whilst allowing you to maintain your pet's weight at an ideal level.

At Davies Therapy and Fitness Centre, our Therapy team will assess your dog, provide helpful exercise guidance and utilise a variety of treatment techniques to help your pet achieve their goals.

To find out more visit vetspecialiststherapy.co.uk

Ask your vet about a referral today.

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