

FACT SHEET

Excess Weight / Obesity

Pet obesity and weight problems have become a nationwide problem and cases are becoming increasingly common in today's dogs, with independent surveys showing one in three dogs are overweight.

Is your pet overweight?

Some people fail to realise when their pet is becoming overweight as it happens slowly over a period of time. If your pet is long-haired it may be more difficult to judge. Obesity is defined as excess body weight often to fifteen percent above normal weight for the individual.

How can you help?

- Give your pet an examination; looking from the top it should be possible to see a waistline
- If your pet is fit, the ribs can be felt but not seen, though if your pet is overweight the ribs can be neither seen nor felt
- Overweight pets will have very little heat tolerance and will pant excessively in the sun and try to find cool places
- Overweight pets will be reluctant to exercise and will not run around and play by themselves as a fit pet might
- Weigh your pet. If you have a large dog, which is too heavy to lift, most large railway stations have electronic scales that you can use. Otherwise use domestic bathroom scales subtracting your own weight. Small dogs can be put in a basket to be weighed, afterwards subtracting the weight of the basket. You need to establish the (normal) average weight for your breed of dog

If you believe your pet has suddenly gained weight it is worth noting that there are other conditions apart from obesity that may be contributory. Pregnancy, congested heart failure, hypothyroidism or growths may be the cause. If you are worried about any of these conditions it is advisable to contact your veterinary surgeon before feeding a low calorie diet.

Physical complications when obesity is present

In dogs there are many associated problems that can occur when carrying excess weight. Extra stress is placed upon the bones and joints compounding any arthritic conditions that might be present and extra pressure is placed upon the heart and lungs causing circulatory and breathing difficulties.

These problems will lead to less exercise being taken, which in turn leads to increased weight gain and possibly liver disease, diabetes, pressure sores and frequent digestive upsets. All these conditions can be detrimental to your pet's health and can cause premature death. They certainly cause a reduced quality of life.

How to help your pet

Once you have established that your pet is overweight and have ruled out the possibility of other causes such as pregnancy, fluid retention, or heart problems, you must establish a weight reduction programme to help your pet achieve a normal weight and healthy energetic lifestyle.

Encouraging your pet to lose weight can be hard work, especially when you have those big brown eyes telling you how hungry they are! The process must involve the whole family and anyone else who the pet comes into contact with. Do not allow your pet to beg at the table and explain to everyone that giving titbits could be seriously detrimental to his/her health.

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The recommended programme to start weight reduction is to first weigh your pet and record the weight on a suitable chart, use the example shown below, and establish a target weight to feed to. This can be determined by either using a breeds average weight chart, (examples on last page) or by reducing the present obese weight by ten percent.

Exercise is important in a weight reduction programme because overweight pets are often reluctant to exercise. Slowly build up the amount of exercise, starting with very short but purposeful walks if necessary. As excess weight is lost you will notice how your pet will become more willing to take exercise.

Record of weight loss chart

DATE	TIME	WEIGHT	LOSS	ADJUSTMENT TO DIET	ADJUSTMENT TO EXERCISE	COMMENTS AND CONFESSIONS

Prevention is better than cure

Pets are as individual as we are, therefore some pets will be more prone to obesity than others. It is worth noting that a neutered pet is more likely to put on weight than a pet that is not neutered, this is because the hormone change can slow down the metabolism, causing weight gain to occur if not carefully monitored.

Weigh your pet regularly comparing the weight against the breed's average weight recommendation. This will help you to be aware of any weight changes.

If your pet's weight is inclined to fluctuate then it may be necessary to adjust the amount of food given.

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Average weight chart for popular breeds

HOUNDS	DOG	BITCH
Afghan	27kg (60lb)	22.5kg (50lb)
Bassenji	11kg (24lb)	9.5kg (21lb)
Basset	22.5kg (50lb)	19.5kg (42.5lb)
Beagle	9kg (20lb)	9kg (20lb)
Blood Hound	41kg (90lb)	36.5kg (80lb)
Borzoï	41kg (90lb)	34kg (75lb)
Dachshund (min)	5kg (11lb)	5kg (11lb)
Dachshund (standard)	9kg (20lb)	9kg (20lb)
Deerhound	45.5kg (100lb)	36.5kg (80lb)
Elkhound	22.5kg (50lb)	19.5kg (43lb)
Finnish Spitz	15kg (33lb)	13.5kg (30lb)
Irish Wolfhound	54.5kg (120lb)	41kg (90lb)
Otterhound	52kg (115lb)	45.5kg (100lb)
Rhodesian Ridgeback	36.5kg (80lb)	32kg (70lb)
Saluki	24kg (52.5lb)	19.5kg (42.5lb)
Whippet	11.5kg (25.5lb)	10kg (21.5lb)

GUNDOGS	DOG	BITCH
Brittany Spaniel	15kg (33lb)	13kg (28.5lb)
English Setter	28.5kg (63lb)	27kg (59lb)
German Short Haired Pointer	28.5kg (62.5lb)	24kg (52.5lb)
German Wire Haired Pointer	28.5kg (62.5lb)	24kg (52.5lb)
Gorden Setter	29.5kg (65lb)	25.5kg (56lb)
Hungarian Vizsla	30kg (66lb)	30kg (66lb)
Irish Setter	30.5kg (67.5lb)	26kg (57.5lb)
Italian Spinone	36kg (79.5lb)	31kg (68.5lb)
Large Munsterlander	27kg (60lb)	25kg (55lb)
Pointer	29.5kg (65lb)	25kg (55lb)
Curly Coated Retriever	30kg (66lb)	29.5kg (65lb)
Flat Coated Retriever	29.5kg (65lb)	29.5kg (65lb)
Golden Retriever	34kg (75lb)	29.5kg (65lb)
Labrador Retriever	30.5kg (67.5lb)	28.5kg (62.5lb)
Cumber Spaniel	36kg (80lb)	29.5kg (65lb)
Cocker Spaniel	13kg (30lb)	13kg (30lb)
English Springer Spaniel	21.5kg (47lb)	19kg (42lb)
Irish Water Spaniel	27kg (60lb)	24kg (53lb)
Welsh Springer Spaniel	27kg (37.5lb)	17kg (37.5lb)
Weimaraner	27kg (60lb)	22.5kg (50lb)

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TERRIER GROUP	DOG	BITCH
Airedale Terrier	21.5kg (47.5lb)	21.5kg (47.5lb)
Australian Terrier	6.5kg (14lb)	6.5kg (14lb)
Bedlington Terrier	9kg (20lb)	9kg (20lb)
Border Terrier	6.5kg (14lb)	5.5lb (12lb)
Bull Terrier	20.5kg (45lb)	20.5kg (45lb)
Cairn Terrier	6.5kg (14lb)	6.5kg (14lb)
Dandie Dinmont Terrier	8kg (18lb)	8kg (18lb)
Smooth Fox Terrier	8kg (17lb)	7.5kg (16lb)
Wire Fox Terrier	8kg (17lb)	7.5kg (16lb)
Lakeland Terrier	7.5kg (17lb)	7kg (15lb)
Manchester Terrier	8kg (18lb)	7.5kg (18lb)
Norfolk Terrier	6.5kg (14lb)	6.5kg (14lb)
Sealyham Terrier	9kg (20lb)	8kg (18lb)
Skye Terrier	11.5kg (25lb)	10kg (22lb)
Staffordshire Bull Terrier	15kg (33lb)	13kg (29lb)
Welsh Terrier	9.5kg (21lb)	9kg (20lb)
West Highland White Terrier	8.5kg (19lb)	7.5kg (18lb)

UTILITY GROUP	DOG	BITCH
Bulldog	25kg (55lb)	25.5kg (50lb)
Canaan Dog	22kg (48.5lb)	19kg (41lb)
Chow Chow	27kg (60lb)	25kg (55lb)
Dalmation	27kg (60lb)	25kg (60lb)
French Bulldog	12.5kg (28lb)	11kg (24lb)
Finnish Spitz	15kg (33lb)	15.5kg (30lb)
Giant Schnauzer	45.5kg (100lb)	41kg (90lb)
Keeshond	19.5kg (42.5lb)	18kg (40lb)
Miniature Schnauzer	9kg (20lb)	7.5kg (17lb)
Poodle (min)	6kg (13.5lb)	6kg (13.5lb)
Poodle (standard)	34kg (75lb)	25.5kg (56lb)
Poodle (toy)	4.5kg (10lb)	4.5kg (10lb)
Schipperke	8kg (18lb)	8kg (18lb)
Schnauzer (min)	9kg (20lb)	7.5kg (17lb)
Schnauzer (standard)	18kg (40lb)	16kg (35lb)
Shih Tzu	7kg (15lb)	7kg (15lb)
Tibetan Spaniel	5.5kg (12lb)	5.5kg (12lb)
Tibetan Terrier	12kg (27lb)	12kg (27lb)

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WORKING DOGS	DOG	BITCH
Bearded Collie	22.5kg (50lb)	20.5kg(45lb)
Border Collie	23.5kg (52lb)	19kg (42lb)
Bouvier Des Flandres	38kg (83.5lb)	33kg (72.5lb)
Briard	38.5kg (85lb)	34kg (75lb)
Bullmastiff	54.5kg (1230lb)	45.5kg (100l
Collie (Rough)	25kg (55lb)	21.5kg (47.5lb)
Collie (Smooth)	27kg (60lb)	22.5kg (50lb)
German Shepherd	36.5kg (80lb)	29.5kg (65lb)
Doberman	37.5kg (82.5lb)	33kg (72.5lb)
Giant Schnauzer	45.5kg (90lb)	41kg (90lb)
Great Dane	54.5kg (120lb)	45.5kg (100lb)
Husky (Siberian)	25kg (55lb)	20kg (44lb)
Hungarian Puli	14kg (30.5lb)	12kg (26.4lb)
Komondor	61kg (135lb)	50kg (110lb)
Lancashire Heeler	6.5kg (14lb)	6.5kg (14lb)
Mastiff	68kg (150lb)	57kg (126lb)
Neopolitan Mastiff	68.5kg (150lb)	68kg (150lb)
Newfoundland	66kg (145lb)	54kg (119lb)
Old English Sheepdog	36.5kg (80lb)	29.5kg (65lb)
Pyrenean Mountain Dog	50kg (110lb)	41 (90lb)
Rottweiler	50kg (110lb)	38.5kg (85lb)
St Bernard	75kg (165lb)	68kg (150lb)
Shetland Sheepdog	9kg (20lb)	9kg (20lb)
Welsh Corgi	11kg (24lb)	10kg (22lb)

TOY GROUP	DOG	BITCH
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel	7kg (15lb)	7kg (15lb)
Chihuahua	2kg (4lb)	2kg (4lb)
English Toy Terrier	3.5kg (8lb)	3.5kg (8lb)
Griffon Bruxellois	3.5kg (7.5lb)	3.5kg (8lb)
Italian Greyhound	3kg (7lb)	3.5kg (7lb)
King Charles Spaniel	5kg (11lb)	5kg (11lb)
Papillon	2kg (4.5lb)	2.5kg (5.5lb)
Pekinese	5.5kg (12lb)	5kg (11lb)
Pomeranian	2kg (4.5lb)	2.5kg (5lb)
Pug	7.5kg (16lb)	7.5kg (16lb)
Yorkshire Terrier	3kg (7lb)	3kg (7lb)

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How can Naturediet help?

Naturediet Senior/Lite is recommended for overweight pets as it has a high fibre content whilst being low in calories and fat. The fibre will add bulk to the food, making your pet feel full, but the lower calories and fat in Naturediet Senior/Lite means that your pet will not gain weight. Feed twice daily to the recommended amount less 20% for your pet's target weight.

DO NOT feed a mixer: Naturediet is a complete meal containing meat, brown rice and vegetables. Most mixers supply carbohydrate energy which not only makes the correct feeding amount more difficult to ascertain but during 'diet', the body assumes 'famine' and will therefore readily convert and store any spare carbohydrate energy as fat. This is why the Atkins diet works so well in humans, though it is not actually appropriate for our digestive systems as a whole.

It is quite normal when starting a weight reduction programme for your pet to still appear hungry, and, some dogs will just eat and eat and it bears no relation to their actual energy requirement - all they think about is food! If this is the case, then there are a few tricks you can try to help fulfill their appetite whilst losing weight:

- Extra vegetables are ideal to bulk out the volume of a meal without adding too many additional calories.
- Slow down their eating – stuff their Naturediet meal into a Kong toy (hollow rubber 'ball'), they then have to slowly lick out the contents which takes quite a lot of time and energy: this wears them out and they generally sleep afterwards which results in better digestion and a more satisfied feeling.
- Provide chewing items with degrees of nutritional value i.e. pigs ears, marrowbone from the butcher, cooked bones from the pet shop, raw carrots, raw broccoli stems: all of these will keep them food-occupied and are all excellent for tooth and gum hygiene as the dog rips and tears at them with his teeth.

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