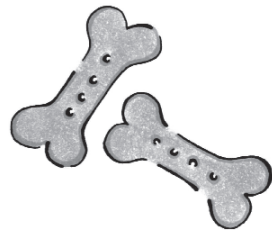


• **Get Tough on Treats**

Many pet owners may change their pet's food to one with fewer calories and still wonder why their dog or cat won't lose weight. An important thing to remember is the treats that the pet is getting. Treat calories can really add up fast and should be included in the pet's daily calorie limit. They need the nutrition that is in their food, where most treats don't contain much nutrition, just a high amount of calories. The types and amounts of treats a pet gets should be carefully considered and should be limited to less than 10% of the pet's total calorie intake. There is a variety of low calorie pet treats available, such as Science Diet Light treats. Also, try replacing commercial treats with green beans or raw baby carrots.



Treat time is usually a bonding time between a pet and their owner. Your pets do not know what is the "normal" size of their treats, so cutting them in halves or fourths can decrease unnecessary calories. Remember that you can also bond with your dog or cat by playing, grooming, or simply petting and talking to them.

Low-calorie Treats

<u>Commercial Treats</u>	<u>Calorie Content</u>
Butler Lean Treats	3 kcal per treat
Hill's Prescription Diet Canine Treats	13 kcal per treat
Hill's Science Diet Light Treats	14 kcal per treat
Royal Canin Veterinary Diet Canine Treats	14 kcal per treat
Milkbone	17 kcal per treat
Royal Canin Veterinary Diet Feline Treats	1.4 kcal per treat
Whisker Lickins Cat Treats	3 kcal per treat
<u>Human Foods</u>	
Air-popped popcorn	31 kcal per cup
Raw baby carrots	4 kcal per baby carrot
Plain rice cake, unsalted	35 kcal per rice cake
Raw snap green beans	34 kcal per cup

Weight Loss Tips for Dogs & Cats

- Measure daily food amounts and divide into several mini meals throughout the day.
- Start with baby steps: gradually change food and treats, and gradually increase activity levels.
- If your dog begs from the table when you are eating, keep some green beans or carrots on hand to give instead. He will still think he is eating whatever you are.
- Be sure no one else, such as children or neighbors, are giving your pet food or treats.
- If you have multiple pets, be sure to feed them separately to avoid one pet overeating.
- When measuring your pet's food, accurately use a standard 8 ounce measuring cup, not a can or other type of unmeasured drinking cup.
- Visit petfit.com for more tips and a weight tracker chart for your pet.



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PET NEWS

A Better Life For Your Pet Through Weight Loss

overweight Pets Put a Pinch on the wallet

- **(Veterinary Pet Insurance)** The average claimed cost of treatment for diseases associated with obesity, such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, hepatitis, and lipomas:
2004: \$702
2005: \$714
2006: \$832
- Insurance claims related to heart attacks in pets rose 47% in the past two years.

A Growing Problem

Obesity in pets is on the rise. This epidemic is affecting up to 40% of dogs and 30% of cats in the United States. Obesity in dogs and cats affect how they live and make them susceptible to numerous health problems if left untreated. Many of us don't realize when our pets start to gain weight. A pound or two may not seem significant, but on a pet, especially a small or medium-sized one, it can be quite significant. If your pet is at a healthy weight, weigh him regularly to monitor any increases in your pet's weight. Also, keep him on a healthy diet and exercise routine because it is easier to prevent obesity than it is to reverse it. However, if your pet is overweight, make the commitment now to help your dog or cat to lose the weight and be healthier. They will live longer, feel better, and will have you to thank!



How did my pet get overweight?

There are many factors that play a role in our pet's weight gain. Since they cannot go buy their food and treats or go through the fast food drive thru, it comes down to one major cause: it's usually our fault. As sad as it is to think we may have done this to our beloved pet, the good news is that we can also help undo it. We all want to spoil our dogs and cats by giving them tasty treats and people food, especially when they give us "the look." But those calories add up quickly and they usually don't have much nutritional value. Let's face it: do we let our human children have ten candy bars a day? Hopefully not, it is bad for them. So why would we give our pet a high calorie treat every time they do something cute or beg? Too much of the wrong foods and treats will ultimately lead to obesity.

How did my pet get overweight?

(Continued)

Besides diet, there are a few other issues that may contribute to weight gain in a dog or cat. Some breeds are genetically predisposed to put on the extra pounds. Dog breeds include Labrador retrievers, miniature schnauzers, dachshunds, shelties, cocker spaniels, beagles and basset hounds. However, any breed that is overfed and not active enough to burn the calories it is consuming can become obese. Cats that are primarily indoors are more likely to be obese due to less exercise.

New studies have shown that spaying and neutering an animal may reduce energy needs by about 25%. Most puppies and kittens are neutered or spayed at about 6 months, which is a time when their growth also slows down. These metabolic changes combined can have a dramatic impact on their energy requirements.

A medical problem, such as hypothyroidism and hyperadrenocorticism, could also play a role in a pet's weight gain. A thorough examination by your veterinarian and some simple bloodwork can rule out a medical condition before your pet starts a weight loss plan. However, if your pet is diagnosed with a disease that has caused weight gain, then proper treatment can be implemented.



Problems with the Pounds

Although your pooch may act a little more chipper or hide under the bed after getting a new haircut, pets aren't really concerned about how they look as far as their weight is concerned. They are aware of how they feel though. Pets that maintain an ideal body weight live longer, healthier lives. In fact, it has been shown that dogs have an increased life span of nearly 2 years if they are at their ideal weight. Obesity in pets can lead to many of the same serious diseases and conditions as in humans. Overweight pets are more susceptible to health problems, including diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer and skin problems.



Diabetes in animals can be very difficult to control. Sometimes it can be controlled with diet alone, but others may require daily insulin shots. Early signs include weakness, increased thirst, frequent urination, unexplained weight loss, depression, and abdominal pain.

Extra weight on a dog or cat increases pressure on joints leading to the early onset of arthritis or worsens an already existing arthritic condition. Large breed dogs at risk for hip dysplasia are at a higher risk if they are overweight. Signs include limping, stiffness or difficulty climbing stairs. Losing weight can relieve the pressure on joints, especially in the hips and legs.

Heart disease and high blood pressure are problems often associated with being overweight because fat also accumulates around the heart and respiratory tract. Signs include coughing, difficulty breathing, intolerance to exercise, loss of appetite and unexplained weight loss. Even a small amount of stress or exercise can lead to heart attacks or life-threatening respiratory collapse.

Dogs and cats that are overweight or obese are more likely to develop skin disorders than those animals at a healthy weight. An unkempt haircoat is usually the first sign and they may

have itchy, scaly skin. Ulcers can develop in skin folds or where skin unnaturally rubs together. Overweight cats usually have a dry and flaky area of their back due to their inability to groom themselves.

Overweight animals are also at an increased surgical risk. They tend to have more bleeding, slower wound healing, and a greater anesthetic risk. Keeping your pet at a healthy weight is the best preventative measure, before an emergency occurs that may require surgery.



A Weight Loss Program for Your Pet

You may already know if your pet is overweight, but there are many people that do not realize their pet is gaining weight or becoming overweight. Dr. Flanary should examine your pet to determine if your pet is overweight and, if so, tell you what your pet's healthy weight should be. Your pet may also need to be checked for underlying medical conditions, such as hypothyroidism, before starting a weight loss program. Regular health checkups and weight checks will ensure your dog or cat's weight loss program is going well. When starting a weight loss program for your pet, remember you are not just changing their food, you are changing your relationship with your dog or cat.

• Diet Change

The first thing that needs to be addressed in a weight loss plan is the food that your pet is eating. It isn't always the type of food, but rather the amount that the pet has received. For pets that are slightly overweight, sometimes just reducing the amount of food may cut the calories enough for the pet to lose weight. But most pets that have become overweight and obese need a complete diet change to take the weight off. There are a variety of low calorie foods available, such as Science Diet Light or Iams Less Active, to help dogs and cats to take off the weight. However, they may only maintain

the pet's weight and help keep them from gaining more. If weight loss is not seen with cutting back on food or switching to a lower calorie food, then it is time for the pet to be on a specialized weight loss food. Prescription Diet r/d and w/d are specially formulated to take the weight off dogs and cats without causing them to feel hungry. They will usually only stay on these foods for a few months before switching back to a low calorie food. Many people are worried about their pet adjusting to a "diet" food because they are doubtful their pet will like or eat it. But a lot of pets take to a new food more readily than their owners expect. To switch your pet's food, mix increasing amounts of the new food with decreasing amounts of the old food over a 7-day period.

Note: Cats should never be put on a crash diet and go more than two days without eating. They can develop hepatic lipidosis, which is a very serious, sometimes fatal, fatty-liver syndrome.



• Increasing Activity Level

Physical activity is essential in a healthy weight loss program for your pet. Walking is an excellent activity for dogs and is also great for cats that are leash trained. The distance traveled is more important than the speed. If walking your pet is not possible, playing with it for at least 10 minutes a day is also beneficial. Toss a ball or toy for the animal to chase or create a climbing area for cats. Some cats may just enjoy playing with a brown paper sack. You can feed your pet in different places so it can hunt for it, making them "work" to find it. Whatever the activity is, make sure your pet receives the physical activity it needs to be healthy. Always start off slowly and gradually increase the activity level of your pet to prevent exhaustion or other problems. And remember to have your pet checked by the veterinarian before starting a weight loss and activity program.