

Information on Obesity and Weight Loss Plans for Dogs and Cats

Your pet's body weight and body condition score have been assessed at this visit to the PHC, and it's important to understand that carrying excessive weight can lead to serious health conditions in our pets:

- Diabetes
- Exercise and heat intolerance
- Difficulty breathing
- Joint and bone pain
- Whole body inflammation
- Increased risk of recurring disc herniations

Body condition scoring is used to objectively measure body fat content and the scale is from 1 to 9, where 1 is very thin, 4 to 5 is 'ideal' and 9 is morbidly obese. Your pet's body condition score was assessed at greater than 6 on this scale, so we recommend a weight loss plan to help your pet reach a more ideal body weight and body condition.

Obesity occurs through an imbalance of calories eaten and calories burned by the animal, which means that some calorie restriction is required to achieve appropriate weight loss. We recommend putting your pet on a veterinary therapeutic weight loss diet to safely reach a calorie goal that will help him/her lose weight. Over-the-counter products marketed for weight management (i.e. sold in grocery or pet stores) are only adequate for 'prevention' or minor weight loss of 5% body weight. Based on the amount of weight loss your pet needs to achieve a better body condition, our best recommendation is to use a veterinary therapeutic product designed with the appropriate level of protein, fat and calories. Some owners want to just feed their pet's same food and cut back on the volume by 20 to 40% of daily calories, however, this approach could result in deficiencies of essential nutrients and is not recommended.

Achieving an appropriate weight for your pet will have the following benefits:

- Less severe arthritis (joint pain)
- Reducing the risk of recurring disc herniations
- Reducing whole body inflammation (excess body fat produces inflammation)
- Lowering the dose of some medication
- Reducing risks associated with anesthesia and surgery
- Longer life expectancy

The goal of a weight loss plan is to get your pet to his/her ideal body condition score, which is between 4 and 5 on a scale from 1-9. We want your pet's ribs to be easily felt and a waist observed (between ribs and hips), with minimal abdominal fat in the belly.

Services offered by the Smith Lane Animal Hospital team include individually tailored programs:

- Determination of caloric requirements for a pet on a per day basis
- Selection of commercial products for your pet's life stage and life style
- Development of individualized weight loss plans (food selection and management practices)
- Monitoring of safe and effective weight loss

If you are interested in a nutrition consult for your pet and would like more information, please contact us at (519) 840-0100 or OVCslah@uoguelph.ca