

A healthy weight for pets



By **Dr Alice Marshall**, Registered Veterinarian (NSW VSB)

Our modern-day lifestyles can contribute to our pets being overweight. Obesity is the most common nutritional condition in Australian pets, with national surveys reporting that 41% of dogs and 32% of cats in Australia are either overweight or obese (PFIAA, January 2020).

Many people review their own health at the beginning of the year, assessing their weight, diet, exercise and fitness levels. It makes sense to do the same for our pets.

Body condition score

The first step is to correctly identify that your pet is overweight.

Due to the differences in breed sizes and 'ideal' weight ranges, a body condition score is a useful tool to help determine if your pet is overweight.

Pets are given a score out of five, with three being ideal and five being obese. You can find a link to a dog body condition score [here](#) and one for cats [here](#). Once you know where your pet sits, it can pay to think about how they got to that score.

Causes

Many factors can contribute to obesity in our pets. Overeating, not getting enough exercise, highly palatable foods, too many treats, underlying illnesses, genetics (breed predisposition) and busy modern-day lifestyles can all contribute to our domestic dogs and cats being overweight.

As owners, we have little control over some of our animals' contributing factors, such as their breed, genetics and age. Yet there are others that we can control as owners - factors such as feeding too many calories like treats or calorie-dense food, or too little exercise.

Why is pet obesity a problem?

Overweight pets are predisposed to many health issues. They can have higher incidences of diabetes, skin issues, osteoarthritis, liver disease, heart disease and even increased susceptibility to infection. (PFIAA, January 2020). Poor coat quality and skin problems can also be a symptom

of obesity as obese animals may not be able to groom themselves properly. Overweight pets are also more susceptible to heatstroke in the summer months.

Veterinary support

If you have determined that your pet is not at a healthy weight, talk to your local vet today. They are best placed to help investigate and treat any underlying reasons for the weight gain and help design a weight loss plan tailored to your animal, its age, dietary needs and activity levels.

It is important to realise that obesity is a common and preventable condition in most cases. Having the support of a professional team within your local clinic can make all the difference as you and your pet embark on this journey together, preventing health risks that can be associated with overweight pets.

This article is for general information only. We recommend that you seek your veterinarian's advice regarding treatment and dietary help for your pet.

1800 999 738
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