



# **OBESITY IN CATS AND DOGS**

## **FACT SHEET 10**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is estimated that between 25-30% of dogs are overweight, with one in four of these falling into the worrying category of obese. Although obesity in cats is much less common (as they are generally more active), a fair number of cats would certainly benefit from a reduction in weight. Obesity is not natural, in fact it is extremely rare to find obese animals in the wild. Being overweight is a distinct disadvantage in terms of survival! It is also just as much of a disadvantage to domesticated cats and dogs.

### **WHY OBESITY IS A PROBLEM**

Overweight animals are, generally, not healthy and are prone to a number of health problems. The most common include:

- Cardiac problems, due to strain on the heart and circulation
- Poor exercise tolerance and excessive panting
- Increased risk of developing chest conditions such as bronchitis
- Additional stress on the limbs, joints and spine
- Increased likelihood of arthritis, rheumatism and back problems developing

Excess weight is also a contributory factor in the development of:

- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Liver disease
- Urinary problems (especially with cats)

Obese animals also suffer from:

- Reduced natural resistance to infection
- Poor immune system function
- A much shorter life expectancy

If your animal is ill, then your vet may find it difficult to examine your dog or cat thoroughly, as the extra fat impairs investigation. Additionally, obese patients present an increased surgical risk as they are:

- Less tolerant to anaesthesia
- Prone to slow wound healing
- Sometimes subject to post-operative infections

## **HOW TO TELL IF YOUR PET IS OVERWEIGHT**

Common telltale signs include:

- Sluggish demeanor
- Excessive panting, especially in hot weather
- Lagging behind on walks
- Reluctance to exercise. This compounds the problem, as fewer and fewer calories are used up and, consequently, stored as fat

As a simple test, stand over your animal and check if you can see a waistline. There should be a depression, even if only slight, behind the ribcage, rather than a bulge. Viewed from the side, the abdomen should not sag and, running your hands over the chest area, it should be possible to feel the ribs fairly easily.

A better way to approach the problem is to try and weigh your animal. Bathroom scales can give you a rough idea, but it is far better to weigh your dog or cat more accurately on electronic scales. Most veterinary practices now have these. A visit to your vet would also provide a good opportunity to discuss your pet's weight problem and any worries with your vet or his staff.

## **STARTING A WEIGHT REDUCTION PROGRAMME**

- Consult your vet. Ask the practice to give your dog or cat a complete check up and help identify any problems that may have arisen as a consequence of it being overweight. It is also a good chance to rule out one or two conditions that might make your pet appear obese. This list includes distension of the abdomen due to pregnancy or fluid retention (as a result of heart problems and liver or kidney disease) and obesity due to under activity of the thyroid gland-hypothyroidism
- Ask to have your animal weighed. Your vet should then be able to tell you just how much weight needs to be lost and will advise you on the best approach
- Getting your pet to lose weight should involve the whole family. Avoid giving titbits, biscuits and treats and stick rigidly to the planned weight loss regime. This will require a degree of patience and perseverance. You should avoid giving in to pleading eyes! Certainly do not allow your animal to beg at the table or take table scraps, as this is a bad habit and hard to break

## **WHAT TO FEED**

### **• DOGS**

For dogs the best approach is to use a reduced calorie, high fibre recipe such as Denes canned food

### **• Low Calorie With Chicken & Liver**

This recipe contains additional fibre to help bulk up the food to make your dog feel full, without providing extra calories. Additionally, this low calorie recipe has lower fat levels, helping reduce the overall calorie intake. It is normal to expect more bulky stools using a diet of this type. You may also notice that your dog may need to pass stools more frequently.

- **CATS**

Although we do not have a specific weight reduction, low calorie recipe for cats, the following Denes canned recipes can be used, with the addition of a little fibre to bulk out the food.

- **Adult With Salmon & Tuna**
- **Adult Original With Chicken & Turkey**
- **Older With Turkey & Lamb**

Add about 1 level tablespoon of either Wheat or Oat bran to each 400g can of food. Aim to feed about 1/3 less food than you would normally feed your cat.

#### **OTHER SUPPORTIVE MEASURES**

- **Regular exercise**

This helps burn up unwanted calories, but is only really practical as far as dogs are concerned. As overweight animals are usually reluctant to exercise, start with gentle exercise to avoid undue stress. Gradually, you should find that as excess weight is lost, then exercise is taken more readily and with less effort.

- **Record your pet's progress**

Plot your pet's weight loss on a chart so that you can monitor any progress. It usually takes a few weeks for any signs of weight loss to become apparent. This is normally the time it takes for the metabolism to adjust. Initially, your cat or dog may appear hungry to the extent that they start scavenging. This can be offset by adding additional bulk to the food such as green vegetables (cooked cabbage, broccoli or cauliflower), chopped raw carrot or celery and extra wheat or oat bran. Normally, if an animal's stomach feels full, the need for extra food can be avoided.

- **Denes All-in-One Tablets**

Other than dietary means and exercise to lose weight, most animals will benefit from taking **Denes All-in-One Tablets**. Seaweed, the main ingredient, stimulates the metabolism, helping to use up extra calories. Seaweed, in some cases, can also help with the symptoms of arthritis.

- **Denes Greenleaf Tablets**

Denes Greenleaf Tablets are based on stinging nettles, which have natural anti-inflammatory and detoxifying properties, and are ideal for helping with arthritis and rheumatism. Greenleaf can help relieve these problems and improve mobility, which, in turn, will help use up calories.

- **Denes Green Lipped Mussel with Glucosamine**

This supplement can be used alongside Greenleaf to help maintain the health of the joints and surrounding structures

If you have any queries concerning your pet's health or feeding problems, you can contact us for free pet care advice by:

- Visiting our website [www.denes.com](http://www.denes.com)
- Emailing us at [info@denes.com](mailto:info@denes.com)
- Calling us on **01273 325364** Mon-Fri, 9am – 12Noon
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