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Starting a Successful Weight Loss Plan

This brochure is provided to help you learn more about controlling weight gain and how to care for your pet at home.

Obesity

Obesity exists when body weight exceeds the optimum for the individual pet by 15% or more. Obesity is the most common nutritional disease in the dog and cat. It is estimated as many as 44% of all dogs and at least 12% of all cats are overweight. Obesity is more common with advancing age and occurs more often in females than in males. It also occurs more frequently in neutered pets.

Signs of Obesity

If you're not sure what your pet's optimum weight is, the most practical way of evaluating your pet is to check the amount of fat covering his/her rib cage. Place your hands on your pet's rib cage with your thumbs on his back. If the ribs are easily felt, your pet is considered to be normal weight. If you can feel fat between the skin and ribs or the ribs are difficult to feel then, your pet is overweight. If the ribs cannot be felt, your pet is obese. In some pets, particularly cats, a large abdomen that hangs down or protrudes to the sides, indicates obesity. *This judgement of your pet's weight status should be confirmed by your veterinarian.* Your veterinarian will rule out other medical conditions that might look like obesity. It is important to confirm that your pet really is overweight and not showing signs of heart, kidney, or glandular disease.

Healthy Risks Associated with Obesity

Obese dogs and cats have a higher incidence of skeletal and cardiac problems, diabetes, impaired reproductive efficiency and risks associated with anesthesia and surgery. Most studies in human beings and animals support the concept that obesity shortens life. In one study, dogs fed and maintained at normal weight lived 1.8 years longer than those eating 25 % more. Also, the pets that maintained a normal weight delayed the onset of arthritis by almost 3 years!

Causes

There are many factors that contribute to the development of obesity, over which we have little control. These include heredity, breed type, reproductive status, sex and age. However, there are factors we can control and it's important that we're aware of these. Factors involved in the development of obesity include early overfeeding, exposure to highly palatable foods, physical inactivity, and pregnancy, along with its psychological effects.

Most obesity is caused by the pet eating more calories than he expends. That's too much food, too little exercise or both. Eating too much food is partly the result of the

attractive taste of today's commercial pet foods. However, the major cause is supplementation with table scraps, snacks, and other foods. The obese-prone pet responds to particularly good tasting food by eating beyond its requirements. Reduced physical activity or exercise that is not matched by reduction in the calories eaten, contributes to obesity, as does eating when bored or idle. Neutering approximately doubles the occurrence of obesity in dogs and cats of both sexes. Overfeeding puppies and kittens predisposes them to obesity as adults by increasing their number of fat cells. Allowing them to become obese during growth will often plague them with obesity throughout life.

Treatment

The treatment of uncomplicated obesity is to reduce the caloric intake while increasing the energy output. This can best be accomplished by feeding a high-fiber, low-fat, less calorie-dense diet. By using this approach, the pet can continue to eat approximately the same volume as usual and achieve a comforting sense of fullness. It is important to set goals for progress, require periodic weigh-ins, and determine how much time the desired weight loss should require.

After a successful weight loss has been obtained, periodic check-ups should assist you in maintaining the lower body weight. Weight loss will improve the animal's appearance, health, and also increase the animal's enjoyment and length of life.

Exercise may be inappropriate for pets in poor health, so be sure to follow your veterinarians' recommendations.

Home Management

By far the most important part of a successful weight reduction program is that every member of the family is certain of the necessity of the weight reduction. Your total commitment to achieving the weight loss is necessary, otherwise the effort may result in frustration, wasted time, energy, and resources. It's essential that everyone cooperate to reach the agreed upon goal.

Reduce your pet's calorie intake by feeding a nutritionally complete low calorie, high fiber diet specifically formulated for weight reduction. Divide the total amount fed per day into as many as three or four meals. Keep the pet out of the room when your food is prepared or eaten. This helps to eliminate begging and feeding snacks. Do not feed with other pets. If your veterinarian recommends it, exercise your pet regularly. Exercise is healthy and increases the chances of success. Keep a record of your pet's weight, charting the weight over time. Preferably, you should weigh your pet weekly, usually in the morning before eating. Feed only the diet and the specific amount prescribed by your veterinarian. Remember, your greatest kindness to your pet is to adhere to your veterinarian's instructions. After successful completion of the program, your veterinarian may perform follow-up exams to help prevent recurrence of the problem. If you are unsuccessful at reducing your pet at home, hospitalization may be recommended. This allows the veterinarian to determine why your pet is not losing weight.

Diet Recommendations

Feeding less of a commercial diet which is not formulated for weight reduction is not recommended. The reduced food intake won't satisfy your pet's hunger and it may cause a vitamin, mineral, or protein deficiency.

The best diet for reducing weight is a nutritionally complete and balanced, high-fiber, low-fat, low-calorie diet, such as Prescription Diet Canine r/d, Feline r/d dietary pet food. With a prescribed diet such as this, your pet can continue eating the same amount of food, having the same feeling of satisfaction and fullness, and getting all the nutrients while eating fewer calories.

Once you've reached your pet's weight reduction goal, then your goal is to maintain this healthier, optimal weight. Your veterinarian may recommend a reduced-calorie, high-fiber weight control diet such as Prescription Diet Canine w/d or Feline w/d dietary pet food. These diets are useful for preventing the recurrence of obesity and for preventing excess weight gain by obese-prone pets.

Feeding Directions

Follow the directions of your veterinarian when feeding any Prescription Diet Brand dietary pet food. Most pets readily accept Prescription Diet dietary pet foods. If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new diet, you may want to try warming the canned diet to body temperature. For dogs, try mixing the dry diet with warm water and waiting ten minutes before serving. Do not use this method with cats, however, another method that works well with cats and some other pets is mixing the diet with your pet's former food, gradually increasing the proportions over a ten day period until only the new diet is being fed.

Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of the treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new diet. However, cats should never go more than 48 hours without eating. If your cat does not eat in two days, contact your veterinarian immediately.

If questions arise, don't hesitate to contact your veterinary staff. We are eager to assist you in achieving a successful weight control program so we will be happy to address your questions and concerns.

WEIGHT LOSS PLAN

This sheet was written due to the large number of pets in our care that suffer from problems aggravated by weight: arthritis, bad backs, change of personality etc.

We recommend:

1. Measure your pet's weight weekly on the same scale.
2. Measure the amount of food fed. Feed twice daily.
3. Only 1 person in the family feeds your pet.
4. No treats. If needed, follow the Hill's snack recommendation.
5. Use diet food if needed. We use a very good prescription food--r/d. It has worked on my own overweight dog. It provides low calories in bulky food.
6. When starting out, dogs can safely go two days without food while you are trying a new diet.
7. Stop their access to cat food, garbage cans, and neighbors. Everyone in the house must abide by the rules. One cheater, and you won't win the battle.

Chart your pet's weight loss.

1. With your veterinarian's assistance, evaluate and weigh your pet.
2. Record your pet's current weight.
3. Set your pet's goal weight, then record.
4. Schedule and record the next appointment date.
5. Record your pet's weight at each veterinary appointment.

GOOD LUCK AND STICK WITH IT!!