



## WEIGHT MANAGEMENT FOR DOGS

*Dogs are meant to be lean, sleek predators, rippling with muscle.*



### THE RISKS OF OBESITY

- 1) **Diabetes:** Diabetes is becoming more common in dogs, due to the increase in obesity. Fat actually produces a hormone that causes insulin resistance, making overweight dogs much more prone to Type 2 diabetes. For dogs diagnosed with diabetes, just as in people, weight loss can prevent progression to the challenging to treat, full-blown diabetes, and helps reduce insulin requirements and thus cost in maintaining treatment in any diabetic cat.
- 2) **Joint problems:** Dogs often develop arthritis. This can limit their ability to feel good and be active (also, inactivity promotes weight gain). Arthritis is uncomfortable! Pain control medications in arthritic dogs is critical to maintain range of motion and strength but does not control all discomfort, has cost and inconvenience – it's much better to eliminate the obesity risk factor for arthritis.
- 3) **Pancreatitis:** The risk of developing this sometimes fatal disease is heightened in overweight dogs.
- 4) **Blood Pressure:** Hypertension can develop placing stress on heart, liver and kidneys, often necessitating the inconvenience and cost of additional medications.
- 5) **Grooming:** Chubby pets often cannot reach areas that benefit from self grooming and the result is an increased number of urinary tract infections, skin rashes and rectal areas that may need daily assistance from the pet owner.

### WHY ARE SO MANY DOGS OVERWEIGHT?

For safety and companionship dogs spend more time indoors and therefore exercise less, they may be bored, we tend to leave food out at all times or unknowingly overfeed (out of love) and they may eat to excess because it is convenient and from boredom. Just six extra pieces of kibble per meal can cause weight gain. Weight gain means you are eating more than your body needs.

In the wild, dogs hunted constantly and some experts estimate that they ate two or three times weekly (not two times daily). Also, hunting is strenuous involving miles of traveling, vigilance, running, an attack and a kill and eating an animal is strenuous. In the wild, there are dangers and dogs were every wary and could not sleep deeply. In the cold energy was spent staying warm and in hot weather energy is spent panting. Now, food floats down and lands on the floor beside out pets, delivered in ready to eat pieces in a comfort controlled home. Our pets need far fewer calories than their wild counterparts do/did.

## DIETING A DOG REALLY IS SIMPLE:

- 1) Dieting a dog is somewhat simple because we control everything that they have access to (they won't go to McDonald's for lunch and not tell you). All you need are a few simple tools and a COMMITMENT to give your pet a longer, healthier, less medicated and more comfortable life.
- 2) Many of the nutrition rules for people apply to dogs:
  - a. Treats, snacks and extra meals promote weight gain.
  - b. Eating to excess without restriction or monitoring weight often leads to weight gain.
  - c. Higher fiber diets promote a feeling of fullness and satisfaction (satiety) = less hungry.
  - d. No diet is fun but can be reasonable (there is always sacrifice but you feel better)!

## THIS IS OUR RECOMMENDATION:

1. Decide how many treats the family must give daily for the family to be happy. Give the same number each day. Set the exact amount and type and brand out on the counter each morning so there is no confusion by the family about what each day's allowance is.
  - a. A treat can be divided into many smaller pieces (smaller is better).
  - b. Consider, reduced calorie biscuits, canned green beans, carrots, celery sticks, rice cakes or the pet's own weight loss diet.
2. Pick a therapeutic restricted calorie/enhanced fiber diet. It is more humane to have a fuller stomach while dieting, and these diets achieve this (but remember that all diets require some sacrificing which means begging and looking sad). You may consider Science Diet r/d (reducing diet).
3. Pick an amount to feed. Start with approximately the amount of the new food that is similar in amount to what you had been feeding.
4. Every two weeks, come in without an appointment and weight your pet on our \$1000 digital scale (no charge of course). If there is weight loss, congratulations and continue to feed that amount and continue to weight every 2 weeks. If the weight has maintained or gained, then a reduction in the amount you feed is necessary and hope that you see weight loss in 2 weeks at the next weigh-in. You may need to repeat step 4 two or three times before you find the amount that results in weight loss. You may be shocked at how little a pet eats before weight loss is realized. DO NOT feel sympathy and feed extra ANYTHING! If there is not weight loss we are not on a diet...begging often begins long before weight loss starts and this is normal and to be anticipated – they do adjust.
5. Look at your pet from above and if you see an hourglass figure (i.e. a waistline) and a hint of where the ribs are, you may have achieved your goal! Feel free to ask if a veterinarian can step out for a second and confirm your observation.
6. Exercise: Food is easy love. Hooking on the lease and walking is REAL LOVE to a dog. Not only does it increase metabolism and burn calories, it is mental health to a dog for which there is no substitute and you will receive the highest level of love and bonding and respect.
7. Maintenance: Once the desired weight has been reached, you can increase calories just enough to stop further weight loss but maintain the current weight that you have achieved. During the discovery period (paragraph 4) you probably had a weigh-in week where there was no weight loss or gain and the amount that was fed that week should be the correct amount to feed for maintenance.

### REMEMBER:

- A. A 14 year study showed dogs fed to an ideal body condition lived 1.8 years longer and were considerably healthier than their littermates who were overfed.
- B. If you restrict calories by restricting a standard diet, all other necessary nutrients are also restricted so always diet with a diet food (they provide reduced calories and adequate levels of all nutrients).

- C. You must do paragraph 4 to succeed because every pet has different metabolism, different genetics and different activity levels so you can't guess the amount to feed or trust the recommendation on the bag, these are just guidelines.
- D. Genes associated with obesity have been found in humans and rodents but not dogs – our careless overfeeding or overfeeding “out of love” is the problem.
- E. 44% of dogs in America are overweight – we are the problem.
- F. Lack of exercise parallels the trend in humans.
- G. Blood tests may identify reasons for weight gain such a hypothyroidism.
- H. Our suggestions are not a criticism; our concern is for your pet to be as healthy as possible and we hope to help you succeed.