



PET ADVICE – OBESITY AND WEIGHT LOSS

Sometimes we can be too kind to our pets in our anxiety to look after them as well as we can and overfeeding is the classic example of this. Modern pet foods are very 'energy dense', meaning that it is surprising how little in quantity is actually required to meet your pet's daily energy requirements. These foods are also very highly palatable and your pet will enjoy large amounts if given the opportunity, even if not hungry. All modern pet foods have a manufacturer's feeding guide, but this is only a GUIDE. Every animal's metabolism, like ours, is different. Some can eat large amounts of food and not gain weight, whilst others seem to gain weight even on 'fresh air'.

There are many reasons why our pets should not be overweight, but there are no good reasons in favour of obesity and is certainly is NOT healthy to be carrying extra weight. The consequences of obesity include:

- Increased strain to the heart.
- Extra weight aggravates arthritis and other orthopaedic conditions.
- In pets that are prone to breathing difficulties, extra weight can seriously worsen the condition.
- Premature ageing – fat animals have poorer exercise tolerance from a comparatively young age.
- Increased surgical and anaesthetic risk.
- Reduction of overall life expectancy.

Despite marketing trying to convince us there are short cuts to dieting, I'm afraid that is not true! It is only by reducing calorie intake and by increasing calorie expenditure via exercise that weight reduction can be achieved. There is NO merit to rapid weight loss; unless advised differently by your vet for medical reasons a rate of approximately one pound (half a kilo) a week is quite acceptable.

Is my pet overweight?

There are breed weight guides available above the scales in the waiting room, but again these are just GUIDES and crossbreeds are difficult to assess. By feeling our pets we can gain some idea as to whether a diet is necessary.

