

Did you know that 17 million dogs and cats in the United States are overweight or obese? Obesity is a medical condition that can cause serious health problems. This is well known among veterinary professionals but not necessarily among owners. In a recent survey, veterinarians estimated that 47% of their patients were overweight or obese; only 17% of their owners had the same perception. One possible explanation for this may be that owners aren't aware how extra pounds affects their dog or cat's overall health. For example, an extra seven pounds on a dog that should weigh 35 pounds would compare to a human that should weigh 150 pounds gaining an extra 30 pounds. That's a big deal! Think for a moment how much the extra weight would affect that human's lifestyle and overall health.

### **What are the health risks of obesity?**

**Breathing problems** - carrying too much weight is harder on the lungs, so pets tend to huff and puff more

**Heart disease** - extra pounds take toll on your pet's heart by making it work harder

**Skin and Haircoat problems** - overweight pets may be more prone to infections, due to extra skin folds that bacteria and yeast thrive in

**Arthritis** - extra weight puts a strain on joints and ligaments, causing pain, discomfort and even torn ligaments, which can require surgical repair

**Reduced activity** - carrying too much weight makes any activity more difficult

### **How do I tell if my pet is overweight?**

The best way is to have your pet evaluated by a veterinary professional, but one thing to try at home is to feel your pet's rib cage. Can you easily feel the ribs or is it difficult to make out where they are? If it's difficult to feel the ribs, your pet may need to lose some weight.

Click on the link below to take a short test that can help determine if your pet is overweight.

<http://www.stopcanineobesity.com/barc.htm>

Many veterinary professionals use something called Body Condition Scoring Cards to help diagnose an overweight pet and then monitor their weight loss progression. Click on the links below to view the version that our veterinary staff currently uses.

<http://www.purina.com/dogs/health/BodyCondition.aspx>

<http://www.purina.com/cats/health/BodyCondition.aspx>

### **How do I get my pet to lose weight?**

Every pet's diet and lifestyle is different so the answer to this question will vary from pet to pet. Consult your veterinary professional for a weight loss program that fits your pet's specific needs.

### **New Product Update**

Recently, Pfizer Animal Health released a new medication to help with weight loss in dogs. This medication is available by prescription only and is meant to be used in conjunction with a weight loss program developed by you and your veterinarian. Please call our office at (715) 693-4560 or click on the link below for more information about this product.

[http://www.pfizerah.com/product\\_overview.asp?drug=SL&country=US&lang=EN&species=CN](http://www.pfizerah.com/product_overview.asp?drug=SL&country=US&lang=EN&species=CN)