



# PET OBESITY

An estimated 45 percent of all U.S. pets are overweight or obese, according to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention. While the best treatment is prevention, it's never too late to help your pet stay in better shape.

Obesity is the most common nutritional disease in dogs and cats. It's more common with advancing age and in females. Obese animals—those with a 15 percent increase over optimum body weight—have much higher incidence of arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, and impaired reproductive ability and greater risks with surgery and anesthesia. Most research in both people and animals suggests that increased weight shortens life.

## Ideal pet weight ranges

Labrador retriever	55 to 80 pounds
Golden retriever	55 to 75 pounds
Yorkshire terrier	8 pounds
German shepherd	70 to 95 pounds
Beagle	26 to 31 pounds
Dachshund	Less than 16 pounds
Boxer	53 to 70 pounds
Poodles (miniature)	11 pounds
Shih tzu	8 to 18 pounds
Miniature schnauzer	11 to 15 pounds
Domestic cat	8 to 10 pounds
Persian cat	10 to 11 pounds
Siamese cat	5 to 10 pounds
Maine coon cat	11 to 15 pounds

## Daily caloric needs for pets\*

10-pound cat	275 calories
10-pound dog	300 calories
20-pound dog	500 calories
50-pound dog	1,200 calories

\* Caloric needs may change based on the pet's age and activity level.

## How do I know whether my pet is overweight?

If you're unsure what your pet's optimum weight should be, perform this simple test: Place your hands on your pet's rib cage with your thumbs on the back.

- ▶ If you feel the ribs easily, 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, your pet is overweight.
- ▶ If you can't feel the ribs, your pet is definitely obese. In some pets, particularly cats, a large abdomen that hangs down may indicate obesity. It's important to have this judgment confirmed by your veterinarian; he or she can rule out other diseases that look like obesity such as heart, kidney, or glandular disease.



### Your pet is a healthy weight if ...

- ▶ You can easily feel its ribs.
- ▶ It has a tucked abdomen and no sagging stomach.
- ▶ You can see its waist from above.



### Your pet is overweight if ...

- ▶ You have difficulty feeling its ribs.
- ▶ It has a sagging stomach, and you can grab a handful of fat.
- ▶ It has a broad, flat back and no visible waist.

## How can I help my pet lose weight?

If your animal is overweight, there are usually painless methods for losing those unhealthy pounds. With careful dietary management and oversight by your veterinarian, changes in diet and lifestyle can lead to a much more productive life. There are prescription diet formulations available from your veterinarian that can make your pet's weight loss easy for you and your pet. Routine walks and playtime combined with sensible feedings can avert the need for medical intervention. As your pet ages, we recommend changing to a low-fat, high-fiber senior maintenance diet. Contact your veterinarian for professional recommendations.

Handout courtesy of Dr. Ernest Ward Jr., Seaside Animal Care, Calabash, N.C.