

Weight reduction in pets

For many pets who need to lose weight, the best approach is to offer a diet food several times a day. It's vital that you count calories when entering into a weight reduction program. Feeding too much will result in no weight loss, and feeding too little can result in serious consequences such as a liver condition called hepatic lipidosis. We can start by calculating the calories your pet needs. You'll first need to have your pet examined by your veterinarian and an ideal weight calculated. Below are the basic formulas for weight loss in dogs and cats:

Dog weight loss

1. Divide ideal weight in pounds by 2.2 to get your dog's weight in kilograms.
2. Calculate the resting energy requirement (RER) based on this ideal weight: **RER in kcal/day = 30 x body weight in kilograms + 70**
3. Feed your dog the resulting number of RER calories per day. If your dog fails to respond to this amount of calories after one month, we will need to reduce the total. Here's a chart that shows how many calories to feed dogs with a range of ideal weights:

Ideal weight (lbs)	Calories (kcal) to feed per day	Ideal weight (lbs)	Calories (kcal) to feed per day
10	210	15	270
20	340	25	410
30	480	35	550
40	615	45	680
50	750	55	820
60	890	65	950
70	1,020	75	1,090
80	1,160	85	1,230
90	1,300	100	1,430

Cat weight loss

1. Divide ideal weight in pounds by 2.2 to get your cat's weight in kilograms.
2. Calculate the resting energy requirements (RER) based on this ideal weight: **RER in kcal/day = 30 x body weight in kilograms + 70**
3. Multiply the RER by 0.8 and feed your cat this number of calories per day. Here's a chart that shows how many calories to feed cats with a range of ideal weights:

Ideal weight (lbs)	Calories (kcal) to feed per day
8	145
10	165
12	190
14	210

Note: These charts provide general guidelines only and are not meant as a substitute for your veterinarian's specific recommendations.

The art of changing diet

When you are introducing a new diet to your pet, allow some time for the transition. Gradually add the new diet over a one-week period. Start by substituting one-quarter of the diet for one to two days, then increase to one-half total volume of food for another two days, then three-quarters new food for a final two to three days, then completely switch to the new diet. To enhance the palatability of the diet food, try warming the food and even adding an omega-3 fatty acid supplement or salmon juice over the food. Canned diets often seem to work better for finicky felines.

Rechecks and weigh-ins

After you've put your pet on a weight loss program, it's critical that you determine if it's working. Each pet is different and may require many changes in diet or routine before we find the correct approach. In general, your pet should be weighed every month until the ideal weight is achieved. If there is no significant weight loss (typically about one pound) in one month, then we'll pursue a new approach. Work closely and actively with your veterinary healthcare team to reach your goals faster and more safely.

Multi-pet households

What do you do if one of your cats is a normal weight and the other is fat? Or one of your dogs waddles while the other is svelte? Here are a couple of solutions:

1. Feed separately. This is the ideal solution for multi-dog or multi-cat households. Feed the fat pet its diet in one room while feeding the other its food elsewhere. After a prescribed time, generally 15 to 30 minutes, pick up the food until the next feeding.

2. Don't leave food out while you're away. In this scenario you can't be sure who ate what, and the smart money is on the fat pet.

Most pets will achieve their ideal weight within six to eight months. If the process is taking longer than this, something needs to be changed. Together—veterinary healthcare team, you, and your pet—we can help your furry friend achieve his weight loss goals safely and successfully. (Information in this handout is courtesy of Dr. Ernest E. Ward Jr.)