

Healthy Weight

Just like people pets live longer and suffer less health impacts when they are a healthy weight

Quick Check

There are two quick ways to check if your pet is a healthy weight. The first is a visual check. Standing over your pet and looking down on them you should be able to see a waist. The second way is to run your hands from ribs to hips. You should be able to feel the indent of the waist.

How Pets Get Overweight

Aside from medical issues the biggest reason pets get overweight is that they consume more calories than they burn. Spaying and neutering may contribute to weight gains of up to 25%. Pets with thyroid issues may have trouble keeping weight off or putting weight on.

But They Are Cute

While it may be true that a chubby pet looks cuddly, cute, and happy, there are real health risks. The most common negative side effects of being overweight include: arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, joint problems, and skin conditions. These side effects mean that your pet may be living in unnecessary constant discomfort or pain. It may also mean that your pet may have a much shorter life expectancy.

What Can Be Done?

While it is true that it is all but impossible to put a cat on a diet there are things you can do to help your pet get back to, or maintain, a healthy weight. Just like us the sad truth is that diet and exercise are the key components to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

The first step is to determine how much food your pet should be eating each day. Work to start reducing what you are feeding them until you reach the proper level.

The second step is exercise. With dogs this is much easier than with cats. You can get the leash and take a dog for a walk, or grab a ball and play fetch. Not so much with cats. You will need to get more creative with cats to find ways to get them in motion. Cats have natural hunting instincts and playing into those instincts is key to getting them in motion. The main thing people have to remember is that cat's do not exercise for long periods. They are sprinters, they stalk and sprint after prey. Some simple ideas include using a LED pointer (never use a laser pointer and never point the light in the cats eyes to avoid permanent eye damage to your pet) and playing chase the dot. Putting a toy on a long string and tied to a belt loop so it moves while they are working around the house is another idea. (This makes for good moving prey and since it is not

close to the human they do not get the idea of attacking the human legs.) A container that has small holes in it and food inside and taped close makes the cat work for their food. A shoebox with holes and a ball inside makes a game like fishing for a mouse. Some cats hate catnip so try it out first before coating toys and cat towers in it. As with any exercise program always start slow and easy and build up over time. Whether walking your dog or getting your cat in motion exercising your pet will take time and commitment.

Conclusion

Your veterinarian can help you determine how big of an issue is your pet's weight, recommend food choices and volumes, and help determine if there are underlying health issues. A mobile veterinarian can come to your home and help with health checkups, and an environmental review. In the greater Keizer and Salem, Oregon area you can always rely on Rolling Vet Animal Care www.rollingvet.com or (503) 400-7992.