

# PET PERKS

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KIRKTON VETERINARY CLINIC

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## Weighing In On A Big Issue

**Obesity in companion animals is on the rise. Pets that carry extra pounds are at risk of serious health concerns**

**So what's the big deal? There's just more of Fluffy to love!**

Unfortunately for fluffy and fido, being overweight carries very serious health risks.

### THE RISKS

1. *Reduced Life Span* - Studies have shown that overweight pets live on average 2 years less than their counterparts.

2. *Arthritis* - Extra weight places additional stress on joints. This can promote and exacerbate arthritis.

3. *Increased risk of illness* - overweight pets are at greater risk of pancreatitis, diabetes, kidney disease and liver disease.

4. *Increased surgical and anesthetic risk* - overweight pets are more difficult to dose correctly; while under general anesthesia, respiratory depression can be more severe; excess intra-abdominal fat makes the surgical procedure more difficult for the veterinarian.

### IS MY PET OVERWEIGHT?

The first step is to work with your veterinarian to determine if your pet has a problem. We use a standardized "Body Condition System" to classify your pet's current condition (see chart on page 2).

### WHAT CAUSES MY PET TO BECOME OVERWEIGHT?

1. *Diet* - overfeeding is a common cause of obesity in pets. We often show affection to our pets through food but over time these little extras can add up to big problems.
2. *Genetics* - some pets that are on appropriate diets and getting exercise can still be overweight. Certain breeds and certain individual animals are more prone to obesity.
3. *Disease* - some diseases can cause weight gain such as hypothyroidism. An assessment by your veterinarian will help to determine if underlying disease is contributing to your pet's weight.



### Did you know...

On average, cats spend 2/3 of their day sleeping

# BANISHING THE BULGE

## EXERCISE

Just like us, consistent physical activity helps keep pets lean.

- Walks and runs on or off leash
- Play dates with other dogs (be sure everyone is vaccinated first!)
- Backyard fetch with a toy
- Join a dog sport group like agility or fly ball
- For cats, interactive toys can be useful to stimulate activity



## DIET

Appropriate diet management is vital to successful weight loss in pets.

### 1. How much to feed?

- Feed to your pets *ideal* weight not the current weight.
- If using a veterinary prescription diet, your veterinary team will provide a feeding plan.
- If you are using a non-veterinary diet, bring your pet and the food bag to your vet where we can calculate a feeding plan based on your dogs caloric requirements.

### 1. What to feed?

- Weight loss food - most overweight pets need to be placed onto a diet food in order to achieve successful weight loss. There is currently two types of diet food for your pet - 1. Calorie controlled foods and 2. Metabolic diets. Your veterinary can provide recommendations based on your pets needs.
- Treats - pick low calorie treats and incorporate them into a calculated feeding program. This can include commercially made low calorie treats or low calorie foods such as carrots and peas. Strictly avoid table scraps!

## BODY CONDITION SCORE

### 1 - TOO THIN

- *Ribs* - Visible with no fat cover
- *Tail base* - Bones prominent with no fat cover
- *Side view* - Severe abdominal tuck
- *Overhead view* - Bones prominent; no fat cover; obvious loss of muscle mass

### 2 - UNDERWEIGHT

- *Ribs* - Easily felt with little to no fat cover
- *Tail base* - Bones raised with little fat cover
- *Side view* - Abdominal tuck
- *Overhead view* - Ribs and hips prominent

### 3 - IDEAL

- *Ribs* - Easily palpated with fat between the ribs
- *Tail base* - Smooth contour with slight fat cover
- *Side view* - Abdominal tuck
- *Overhead view* - Well proportioned waist

### 4 - OVERWEIGHT

- *Ribs* - Difficult to palpate with moderate fat cover
- *Tail base* - Thickened with fat but bones still palpable
- *Side view* - No abdominal tuck
- *Overhead view* - Back broadened at the waist

### 5 - OBESE

- *Ribs* - Very difficult to palpate with significant fat cover
- *Tail base* - Thickened with fat; bones not palpable
- *Side view* - No waist
- *Overhead view* - Back markedly broadened with no waist

