

# Managing your cat's weight

The initial factor affecting management of your cat's daily nutrition and exercise is whether they are an 'indoor' or an 'outdoor' cat.

## Indoor

If your cat's environment is limited to your home then you need to provide the stimulation and opportunity for exercise that they are missing by not exploring the outside world. They will need:

- Lots of toys - rotated regularly to keep them interested.
- Things to climb and hide in.
- Regular play times with the family using interactive toys.
- More brushing, as the constant temperature indoors means moulting is a year round event.
- A diet that can help with hairballs and reflects their lower activity levels.

## Outdoor

Being able to freely explore outside can make managing their weight easier but does come with other factors to consider:

- Their natural defences need supporting as they are exposed to extremes of weather.
- They also need protecting from diseases which may affect them and the potential traumas caused by fighting.
- Outdoor cats need a higher energy diet to cope with changing temperatures and higher activity levels.

## Obesity

Obesity is a growing concern in domestic cats with an increasing trend for 'indoor' cats and neutering your cat (which reduces their energy requirements). An 'outdoor' cat weighing 4kg requires approx. 300kcal per day whereas an 'indoor' cat weighing 4kg requires approx. 200kcal per day.

A cat's health is adversely affected by obesity and excess weight should serve as an early warning sign. Complications include musculoskeletal or joint problems, increased risk of diabetes and sometimes urinary problems.

Your cat's ribs and backbone should not be visible but still be easy to feel as you pet them. A 'waist' should be easily identifiable and their belly should not sag. If the abdomen is stretched and you have to search using pressure with your fingertips to find your cat's ribs then you should take action to rectify your cat's weight.

Your cat's ideal weight is generally reached at the end of their growth period (about 8-12 months old). Measuring their weight at this point can provide a 'fit' weight which is useful as a reference point to maintain during your cat's life.

## Neutering

After neutering a change in your cat's hormone balance occurs - cats will very quickly try and increase their food intake by 20%. The reduction in energy expenditure (30%) that comes with neutering combined with this desire to consume more food does increase the risk of excess weight gain further. Once neutered your cat will probably need to change to a specialised diet which allows for reduced calorie intake whilst feeding at least the same volume of food in order for your cat to feel full.

