

Managing your dog's weight

Dogs need a diet which takes into account their breed, size, age and activity level. Even within a breed a working dog will not have the same nutritional requirements as a dog living in an urban environment. As a dog's weight increases their energy requirement per kilogram of body weight decreases - small breed dogs should receive a diet with a higher energy concentration than a large breed dog.

Excess weight corresponds to an imbalance between energy intake and energy output. An excess in food consumption is often compounded with a lack of exercise which encourages weight gain. Certain breeds such as: Cocker Spaniels, Labrador Retrievers and Beagles are genetically predisposed to weight gain. A tendency for excess bodyweight can also originate from overfeeding a dog during its growth period.

Diet control

Simply reducing the quality of food eaten daily by the dog can pose a problem. They may not easily accept it and it can cause nutrient deficiencies. The correct food to use will maintain the meal volume as much as possible, concentrate nutrients and reduce calorie intake. The right diet needs to be coupled with:

- More exercise and playtimes - longer or more frequent walks, playing fetch, swimming etc.
- Rationing treats - low fat/low calorie ones only and daily food intake to be reduced accordingly.

Obesity

Obesity is a disease which must be taken seriously in our dogs as it often leads to further health complications - arthritis, cardiorespiratory problems etc. It may impact on breeding abilities and has also been linked to some skin problems. The overall picture is that obesity will reduce the dog's life expectancy.

Whenever your dog visits the vet we always weigh them so we can keep a very accurate log of any changes in weight throughout their life. This is particularly important after neutering when the majority of owners need to change their dog's diet to take into account a desire to eat more coupled with burning less energy. We can show you how to roughly 'body score' your pet so see if they are carrying any excess weight. Our free weight watcher nurse clinics can provide a full assessment of your dog's condition and ongoing support with weight loss to help achieve it and maintain it so you have a healthier dog in the long term.