

# ORAH Info:

## Managing your pet's weight



Did you know that approximately 75% of dogs and cats are overweight? Heavy pets suffer from many of the same diseases as heavy people, including a greatly increased risk of joint problems and diabetes. Arthritis is one of the most common health problems in older pets, and severely impacts their quality of life. Some fascinating nutritional studies in dogs show that, by keeping them thin, we can delay, decrease or even eliminate their arthritis entirely, as well as lengthening their lives. Overweight pets actually age faster than thin pets; in dogs, this translates to a shorter life span by about two years!

### HOW CAN I TELL IF MY PET IS TOO HEAVY?

Your dog or cat should have a readily visible waist (or feel-able, if she or he is heavy-coated). When seen from the side, some cats have a low-hanging skin flap, as tigers do; this alone does not mean they are overweight. No matter how fuzzy your pet is, each individual rib should be distinctly felt when you press along the chest. The ribs don't lie!

Healthy weight loss is slow but steady. A small change can have a major effect over time. Try simple steps such as feeding meals instead of free-choice food (or reducing the calories in a meal if you are already doing this) and limiting treats. Most dogs are great walking companions -- other household members can benefit as well by developing a consistent exercise routine. Encourage the whole family to show their love with pats and attention, or better yet, a walk or play session, instead of treats. Then stop by Onion River Animal Hospital every 2 weeks to weigh your pet and track your progress.

### WHAT IF MY PET IS NOT LOSING THE WEIGHT?

If your pet just can't seem to lose the weight, we recommend an appointment with one of our veterinarians. There are treatable medical conditions which may prevent weight loss (such as hypothyroidism in dogs) and further testing may be necessary to identify these conditions in your pet.

### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WEIGHT LOSS FOODS:

The key to weight loss in cats is limiting caloric intake by meal feeding. Cats CANNOT lose weight by being fed free choice. Most cats will do best on a low-carb, high-protein diet, similar to their natural diet as predators. This usually means canned food, about 6 oz per cat per day. There are also a few dry diets such as Hills Metabolic Advanced Weight Solution, Hills t/d, Purina DM, and Evo, that fit the special nutritional needs of overweight cats.

For dogs, a good choice is Hills Metabolic Advanced Weight Solution diet. It is available in both dry and canned forms, as well as treats. Feeding this diet exclusively helps address obesity while meeting your dog's nutritional needs and still allowing for an occasional snack.

### LET'S GET STARTED!

Please ask us to tailor a weight-loss program to suit the needs of your pet and your family. We'll help you choose a diet, make an exercise plan, schedule regular weigh-ins, and measure your pet's progress. Once your pet has achieved the ideal goal weight, it will take consistent attention on your part to maintain regular exercise and feed appropriate amounts. Together we can help our pets live longer, healthier lives.

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