



Weight Management

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Obesity is the second most common disease that affects our pets. It is a life-threatening epidemic that is steadily on the rise. Studies have shown that an overweight pet is more likely to develop diabetes, heart disease, joint problems, and some forms of cancer.

Prevention is the best way to protect your pet from this disease. Keeping your pet at its ideal weight from the time it is young will decrease the likelihood of your pet becoming overweight as it ages.

In the case that your pet is already carrying a few extra pounds, a strict diet and some extra exercise can easily help your pet reach and maintain a healthy weight.

Maintaining the ideal body condition for your pet will help them live a long, comfortable, healthy life with you.

Get to Know Your Food

You can learn a great deal about your pet's food with just a little bit of investigation. It is important that you contact the company's customer service line and request a nutrient profile, as well as read all the information provided on the bag. Below are some items to locate on the bag.

1. The Guaranteed Analysis

The guaranteed analysis gives you information regarding the nutritional content of the food. It uses a percentage to relay the amounts of protein, fat, fiber, moisture, and in some cases, ash.

Next to each item in parentheses you will see one of two things:

- (min) which means there is at least that percent
- (max) which means there is no more than that percent

*Do note that the "min" and "max" are not exact amounts and there can be more than the "min" and less than the "max."

The best way to find out what the nutrient levels are in your food is to call the manufacturer and request a nutrient profile. The percentages will be a fairly exact amount on a dry-matter basis (this means after the moisture is removed). Pages 10-11 contain charts that provide you with the recommended amounts of different nutrients for a given age group.

2. Feeding Instructions

The feeding instructions will help you determine what amount of food to feed your pet. BUT remember, the instructions should be taken as a loose guide only.

Just like human beings, one animal's caloric needs differ from another.

- “Fluffy” the dog
 - Weight: 40lbs
 - Exercise: out in the yard 3-4 times daily
 - Feed: 0.5 cup twice daily
- “Buttons” the dog
 - Weight: 40lbs
 - Exercise: 5 mile run everyday
 - Feed: 1.5 cups twice daily

This is all based upon the amount of calories they will need, on a given day, during a given point in their lives. Feed amounts will increase or decrease many times throughout their lives as their caloric needs change.

The best way to determine the proper amount of food for your pet is to speak to your veterinarian.

3. The “AAFCO” Statement

The Association of American Feed Control Officials, enforces policies that ensure your pet’s foods are manufactured and handled safely.

Located on the bag, this statement should ideally contain that the food was used in “animal feeding tests according to AAFCO procedures” and that it provides “balanced nutrition” for a specific age group of animals.

For example: “Animal feeding tests using AAFCO procedures substantiate that XYZ Diet provides complete and balanced nutrition for the maintenance of adult dogs.”

*Keep an eye out for foods that say “balanced nutrition for all life stages.” A puppy or kitten requires different amounts of nutrients than an adult or senior dog or cat. Nutrient requirements change with age and health conditions, therefore their food should change as well.

Is your pet overweight?

Accepted weight ranges are set forth amongst different breeds, but they do not apply to every pet. The best way to determine if your pet is overweight is to assign him or her a body condition score.

The body condition scores range from 1-5.

1- Very Thin

3- Ideal

5- Obese

To assess your dogs body condition:

1. Look at your pet from above.
A waist should be seen after the end of the rib cage.
2. Look at your pet from the side.
The abdomen should tuck up at the end of the rib cage.
3. Run your hands over your pet's ribcage.
With a small amount of pressure the ribs should be easily felt.
*If your pet begins to take on the appearance of a hot dog, a cylinder with no definition, they are most likely packing a few extra pounds.

See page 12 for a body condition chart to make it a bit easier to determine your pet's score.

If you believe your pet is overweight you should consult your veterinarian for a healthy plan, to obtain a healthy weight.

Helpful Tips to Cut the Pounds

1. Use a Measuring Cup

When feeding your pet always use a measuring cup. It is important to know the exact amount being fed, to allow for easy adjustment, in addition to knowing the amount being consumed. You can use an ordinary household measuring cup or request one from your veterinarian.

2. Meal Feed

Meal feeding a measured amount of food is the most effective way to monitor your pet's food intake. Leaving food out free choice commonly leads to weight gain. It is rare to find a cat or dog that eats only the food it needs in a given day. Keep in mind that most animals will continue to eat when food is available.

3. Cut out the treats and table food.

Treats are a major contributing factor to weight gain, but let's face it we love giving our pets treats. Try to cut the amount of treats given each day in half, or try alternative treats like baby carrots or an apple slice (for dogs).

When it comes to table food, use extreme caution before giving anything to your pet. There are many foods that could harm your pet, so the best option is to

avoid it all together. Not only are you adding extra calories you are putting your pet at risk for illness.

4. Cut back the food.

The daily energy requirement for maintenance for most pets is much lower than one would think. We have to remember to feed for the amount of calories being expended by the pet. It is when we begin feeding more calories than they burn that excess weight is gained. See page 9 for a worksheet to help you determine the proper amount of calories for your pet.

5. Try a Lite/Light or Low Calorie Diet

Changing your pet to a low calorie diet can make an incredible difference in helping your pet maintain an ideal weight.

A low calorie diet must say Lite/Light or low calorie. Other terms such as “low fat,” “healthy weight,” or “weight management” are not indicative of a low calorie diet.

*In the case of an overweight cat it often helps to change to a canned food diet. Canned foods contain higher levels of protein, which cats are able to metabolize more efficiently than the carbohydrates found in dry foods.

6. Add Green Beans

Frozen green beans are a great option when your pet needs to lose a few pounds. They are empty calories that will help fill your dog’s belly. Although we usually

recommend this option to dog owners some cat owners have reported success with the use of green beans. If you would like to try using green beans as part of your pet's diet contact your veterinarian for a recommendation.

7. E-X-E-R-C-I-S-E!

Exercise is an important component for weight loss. Try going five or ten extra minutes on your walk with your pup or have your kitty walk upstairs or jump onto the counter to be fed. These small additions to your pets activity can make a great difference in the amount of calories they burn each day.

Feed Ration Worksheet

This worksheet will help determine your pet's Daily Energy Requirement (DER). Have your calculator and nutrient profile ready.

1. Pet's weight in kilograms.

A kilogram is the measurement of weight most commonly used in the veterinary field. This equation requires your pet's weight in pounds to be converted to kilograms. The weight used should be your pet's ideal weight based on your veterinarian's recommendation.

$$\text{Kg} = \frac{\text{_____ pounds}}{\text{Pet Weight}} \div 2.2$$

$$\text{Ex: kg} = 40\text{lbs} \div 2.2 = 18.8\text{kg}$$

2. Pet's Resting Energy Requirement (RER)

$$\text{RER} = 70 \left(\frac{\text{_____ kg}}{\text{Pet Weight}} \right)^{0.75}$$

$$\text{Ex: } 70(18.8)^{0.75} = 631$$

$$\text{RER} = 631$$

*If you do not have a scientific calculator, the calculator provided in Windows has scientific capabilities. Open the calculator, select view on the top menu bar then select "Scientific." The equation is entered as follows:

- enter your pet's weight in kg
- select the exponent button $[x^y]$
- enter 0.75
- select equals
- multiply by 70
- select equals

3. Pet's Daily Energy Requirement (DER)

Based on your veterinarian's recommendation, select one of the following to determine your pet's DER:

Feline

Weight Loss = $0.8 \times \text{RER}$

Obese Prone = $1.0 \times \text{RER}$

Neutered Adult = $1.2 \times \text{RER}$

Intact Adult = $1.4 \times \text{RER}$

Canine

Weight Loss = $1.0 \times \text{RER}$

Obese Prone = $1.4 \times \text{RER}$

Neutered Adult = $1.6 \times \text{RER}$

Intact Adult = $1.8 \times \text{RER}$

Ex: Obese Prone

= 1.0×631

= 631 kcal/day

4. Daily Feed Ration

Using your pet's nutrient profile locate the amount of calories per cup or can on your food. It is best to divide the calories allowed each day into two meals.

Ex: XYZ Light Dog Food = 295 kcal/cup

The dog is allowed 631 kcal/day

The best option for this dog is 1 cup in the morning and 1 cup in the evening. This is a total of 590 kcal.

5. Treats

Treats **MUST** always be considered in the daily feed ration. An average small dog biscuit has 20-25 kcal. This is a large amount of kcal when we consider the size of these treats. Our example dog would be allowed **ONLY 2 biscuits** each day!

Nutritional Recommendations

Canine

(as printed in Small Animal Clinical Nutrition 4th Edition pg 223)

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Recommended Food Levels*</i>		
	Young to middle aged	Obese Prone	Older
Energy Density (kcal ME/g)	3.5-4.5	3.0-3.5	3.0-4.0
Energy Density (kJ ME/g)	14.6-18.8	12.5-14.6	12.5-16.7
Protein (%)	15-30	15-30	15-23
Fat (%)	10-20	7-12	7-15
Crude Fiber (%)	≤5	≥5	≥2.0
Calcium (%)	0.5-1.0	0.5-1.0	0.5-1.0
Phosphorus (%)	0.4-0.9	0.4-0.9	0.25-0.75
Ca/P Ratio	1:1-2:1	1:1-2:1	1:1-2:1
Sodium (%)	0.2-0.4	0.2-0.4	0.15-0.35
Chloride (%)	0.3-0.6	0.3-0.6	0.3-0.5

* Dry matter basis. (To find this information about a dog food, contact the company and request the nutrient profile.)

Feline

(as printed in Small Animal Clinical Nutrition 4th Edition pg 309)

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Recommended Food Levels*</i>		
	Young to middle aged	Obese Prone	Older
Energy Density (kcal ME/g)	4.0-5.0	3.3-3.8	3.5-4.5
Energy Density (kJ ME/g)	16.7-20.9	13.8-15.9	14.6-18.8
Protein (%)	30-45	30-45	30-45
Fat (%)	10-30	8-17	10-25
Crude Fiber (%)	<5	5-15	<10
Calcium (%)	0.5-1.0	0.5-1.0	0.6-1.0
Phosphorus (%)	0.5-0.8	0.5-0.9	0.5-0.7
Ca/P Ratio	0.9:1-1.5:1	0.9:1-1.5:1	0.9:1-1.5:1
Sodium (%)	0.2-0.6	0.2-0.6	0.2-0.5
Potassium (%)	0.6-1.0	0.6-1.0	0.6-1.0
Magnesium (%)	0.04-0.1	0.04-0.1	0.05-0.1
Chloride (%)	>0.3	>0.3	>0.3

* Dry matter basis. (To find this information about a cat food, contact the company and request the nutrient profile.)