

Dieting your dog

Why is being fat a problem?

You might be fed up of being told your pet is overweight! So why do we think it is so important? Basically being overweight is unhealthy. It puts extra pressure on all the body's systems, which can lead to an inability to exercise, diabetes, shortness of breath, a decreased life expectancy, etc. Conditions such as heart disease and arthritis are made much worse by being fat.

What has made him/her overweight?

Very simply if an animal is overweight it is eating too much for the exercise it is doing. Excess calories are stored as fat. Obviously there are individual factors to take into account, e.g. breed, medical conditions and lifestyle. Neutering is only a cause of weight gain if it is allowed to be!

How do you diet a dog?

- 1) Think hard about what your pet is actually eating throughout the day. **BE HONEST!** What is being fed in addition to the food that goes into the dog bowl? Compare the amount of food you give with the manufacturer's guide.
- 2) **Cutting out titbits** can be hard as it is one of the ways we communicate with our dogs. Try using a piece of his/her daily allowance, or use fruit or vegetables instead.
- 3) **Use reduced calorie diets.** Most brands do a light version, or use specialist weight loss diets available through us, e.g. Hills r/d diet. Measure out the amount recommended for his/her target weight.
- 4) **Divide the daily food into more meals.** A percentage of each meal is used to digest it, so by increasing the number of meals you will increase the amount used. Plus your dog doesn't get so hungry.
- 5) **Increase activity and exercise.** If there is a reason why he/she can't exercise, come in and talk to us, there may be something we can do to make things easier.
- 6) Make sure that anyone who looks after your dog is following the rules! This means the **whole** family, dog-sitters, even neighbours.
- 7) Come in for **regular, free of charge, weight checks.**
- 8) If you are doing all of this and still not winning there are drugs available which may help. We are finding some **new treatments** very helpful in dogs that we have examined and found to be free of medical conditions such as hypothyroidism. Please do ask our advice.