Understanding overweight dogs

HEALTH STUDY RESULTS

Obesity carries severe welfare risks for dogs. Obese dogs have shorter lives, reduced quality of life and higher frequencies of some important conditions including arthritis, breathing problems, heart disease, diabetes and certain types of cancer.

**Number of dogs in study**

22,333

**Percentage of overweight dogs**

7.1%

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**How does the risk of being overweight differ by breed?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breed</th>
<th>Relative risk</th>
<th>Risk compared to crossbreeds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pugs</td>
<td>3.1x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beagles</td>
<td>2.7x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Retrievers</td>
<td>2.6x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Springer Spaniel</td>
<td>2.0x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border Collie</td>
<td>1.7x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labrador Retriever</td>
<td>1.7x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalier King Charles Spaniel</td>
<td>1.5x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocker Spaniel</td>
<td>1.3x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Predisposed breeds**

Pugs were 3.1 times **MORE** likely to be overweight than crossbreds.

Shih-tzus were 2.0 times **LESS** likely to be overweight than crossbreds.

**Protected breeds**

Dogs aged 6 to < 9 years were 3.0 times **MORE** likely to be overweight than dogs < 3 years.

Neutered males and females were 1.9 times **MORE** likely to be overweight than entire females.

Neutered dogs are at greater risk of being overweight than entire dogs. Neutered dogs have different nutritional requirements to entire dogs. Owners should discuss diet carefully with their veterinarian.

Approximately 7% dogs are reported here as overweight, but the true number could be even higher. Owners are encouraged to routinely discuss their dog's weight and lifestyle with veterinary professionals.

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**Other factors predisposing to being overweight**

- Certain breeds, such as Pugs and Beagles, are at high risk of being overweight. Owners of these breeds should pay particular attention to their dog’s bodyweight and adjust diet and exercise as necessary.
- Neutered dogs are at greater risk of being overweight than entire dogs. Neutered dogs have different nutritional requirements to entire dogs. Owners should discuss diet carefully with their veterinarian.
- Dogs aged 6 to < 9 years were 3.0 times **MORE** likely to be overweight than dogs < 3 years.
- Neutered males and females were 1.9 times **MORE** likely to be overweight than entire females.
- Approximately 7% dogs are reported here as overweight, but the true number could be even higher. Owners are encouraged to routinely discuss their dog’s weight and lifestyle with veterinary professionals.

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**RVC VetCompass**

[https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass](https://www.rvc.ac.uk/vetcompass) carries out welfare research based on anonymised clinical information shared from over 30% of UK veterinary practices. We are very grateful to the owners and veterinary professionals who contribute to VetCompass research.