Overweight Dogs

WHAT OWNERS NEED TO KNOW

Being overweight is the most common nutritional disorder in dogs, usually resulting from dogs eating too much or moving too little. Genetics also play a part, with certain breeds at greater risk of becoming overweight.

How do I tell if my dog is overweight?

- Struggling to see or feel your dog’s ribs, spine or waistline.
- Abdominal sagging.
- Reduced mobility, reluctance to go on walks, play games and climb stairs.
- Excessive panting or difficulty breathing.

What are the risks if my dog is overweight?

- Your dog may have a shorter and reduced quality of life.
- Higher frequencies of unpleasant diseases including arthritis, heart disease, breathing problems and certain types of cancer.

How do I prevent my dog becoming overweight?

- Regularly weigh your dog and assess their body condition using this standard scale.
- Consider what and how often you feed your dog. Treats should make up less than 10% of your dog’s diet.
- Avoid high calorie treats and titbits.
- Adjust how much you feed depending on your dog’s body shape. Don’t stick to guidelines if that amount makes your dog gain weight.
- Ensure your dog gets enough exercise (discuss with your vet if unsure).
- Neutered dogs are at risk of weight gain. Adjust your dog’s diet and exercise after neutering.
- Certain breeds, such as Pugs, Beagles and Golden Retrievers, are at higher risk of becoming overweight. Owners of these breeds should take extra care over their dog’s diet and exercise.
- Weight gain is common in middle-aged dogs. Continue to pay attention to your dog’s weight as they age.
- Before getting a dog, consider if you can meet the lifestyle and exercise needs of the breed.

What should I do if my dog is already overweight?

- The good news is that weight gain is reversible, but requires some effort from you.
- Discuss your dog’s diet and lifestyle with your vet. There are calorie-restricted veterinary diets available which might benefit your dog.
- Many vet practices offer “weight clinics” as a way to monitor your dog’s weight loss journey.

References