

**New Year's resolution to lose weight? Pet Obesity is on a scary increase! Do yourself and your pet a favor re-examine nutrition and create planned exercise that can not only be enjoyable but increase the human-pet bond! The added benefit, we humans may shed a pound or two as well!**



**Here are some statistics from Dr James Article:**

Obesity amongst humans is obviously on the rise and the media is having a field day with this growing epidemic. Due to poor food choices, lack of exercise and sheer lack of education, we as the human race are killing ourselves and our children with food.

### **Statistics #1**

According to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, out of the 77.5 million dogs in the USA, an astonishing 35 million of these dogs are considered overweight and 6.7 million are considered clinically obese.

So what... you say...right? No big deal! A little extra weight never hurt anyone. In comes statistic number 2.

### **Statistic #2**

According to the Purina Lifespan Study you might as well plan on your **overweight pet living 2 years less.** Kudos' to Nestle Purina PetCare who had the foresight and invested their time and money in showing the world, yet another reason why not maintaining ideal body condition can have devastating effects on your pets long term health. The study took place over 14 years and was conducted at the Purina Pet Care Center in Missouri, USA. There were 48 dogs that were separated in two different groups. Though all of the dogs were fed a nutritionally complete diet, the amount of food fed differed for the two groups.

The results were astonishing. The study clearly showed that dogs that were maintained in their ideal body condition lived a longer and healthier life. Stop for one minute and just consider the implications of this study to our health. How many years are we taking off of our lives by carrying around that extra weight? Hmmm...

**The one thing we as people and pet owners have full control over is the food that we and our pets consume.**

Here is a list of the Five Most Common Risk Factors of Overweight Pets:  
(courtesy of the Association of Pet Obesity Prevention)

1. **Osteoarthritis & Poor Joint Health potential for Cranial Cruciate Ligament Injury**
2. **Insulin Resistance & Type 2 Diabetes**
3. **Heart & Respiratory Disease**
4. **Kidney Disease**
5. **Cancer**

Other potential problems include:

1. **Skin issues from inability to groom**
2. **Urinary, GI & bowel movement issues**
3. **Behavioral changes**
4. **Increased veterinary visits with associated costs**
5. **Increased feed costs**

## SOOOOO what can we do about it?

Here are a number of helpful tips from Mississippi Veterinary Services

1. **Have your pet's BCS (Body Condition Score) evaluated** by an animal health care professional.  
Just like humans the weight on the scale is only a number if build and breeds aren't considered.  
The chart below shows Ideal at BCS 3 where you can appreciate the indent at the waist as well as how the chest narrows and thins out as it becomes the waist, flank area.



2. After assessment in person or with a simple phone call have your veterinary health professional reevaluate your nutrition plan for your pet. Have the following information available:
  - a. **How do you feed your pet?** Is it free choice, unmeasured food is out at all times? Do you feed measured amounts free choice for the day, or is it measured amounts at multiple feedings? Do you time restrict feed, where measured or unmeasured food is out, but only for a specific time?
  - b. **Do you feed treats?** Treats should never be more than 10% of the caloric needs of the pet per day. By reviewing the caloric needs we can choose low cal treats so you can actually give more treats per day, or give the same amount of treats, just better quality.
  - c. **Who feeds the pets?** Is it a job delegated to one person, do the kids feed the pets, do friends always bring treats over, does Dad always sneak the cereal bowl to the dog after breakfast!
  - d. **What brands of food and treats are you currently feeding,** bring us the labels we'll help you to feed the right amounts of the food you currently have your pets on. Although we would love to sell you the brands we offer, we understand there are a number of great foods out there and the only issue is how much is being fed! We aren't trying to switch you over, just trying to work from a prevention standpoint to increase your pet's lifespan.
  - e. **Lifestyle and life stage determine caloric needs.** What kinds of lifestyle or activities does your pet do? Examples: sedentary indoor cat, loves to sleep all day on the window sill. Or active indoor outdoor cat, supplementing with birds and mice he catches! How about weekend warrior lab, spends the week doing quick walks Am & PM with couch time all day then we go to the dog park or hike on weekends for some extreme exercise and play. ( life stage is determined by the age, neuter status and breed of the pet)
3. **Implement change or simply tweak the current plan!** In pets, we only want to see weight loss of 0.5-2% per week depending on species and breed, but over time the benefits will certainly amount to big gains by spending less on food, veterinary bills and increasing pet health and as a great side benefit our own human health.

Sylvia Stanton RVT January 2013

For more information you can check out:

Association for Pet Obesity Prevention: <http://www.petobesityprevention.com>

Nestle Purina PetCare: <http://www.longliveyourdog.com>

Here are some other statistics to keep in mind when caring for a pet:

- 35 percent of the total pet population is overweight
- One extra pound on a Chihuahua is equal to 38 pounds on an average woman
- One ounce of cheese for a 20-pound dog is equal to a human eating one and a half hamburger