

## *Excess Weight and Healthy Weight Loss*

### How to tell if your pet is a healthy weight











- Ribs easily felt
- Tucked abdomen—no sagging stomach
- You can see a waist when viewing your dog from above

### Your pet is overweight if...

- Difficult to feel ribs under fat
- Sagging stomach
- Broad, flat back
- No waist

### Common health risks of obesity in pets

- Decreased lifespan
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Osteoarthritis
- Breathing disorders
- Increased risk of cruciate rupture
- Decreased heat tolerance

<b>I</b>	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, and pelvic bones easily visible.</li> <li>▪ No palpable fat.</li> <li>▪ Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.</li> <li>▪ Prominent pelvic bones.</li> </ul>
<b>II</b>	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ribs easily palpable</li> <li>▪ Minimal fat covering</li> <li>▪ Waist easily noted when viewed from above</li> <li>▪ Abdominal tuck evident</li> </ul>
<b>III</b>	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ribs palpable, but not visible</li> <li>▪ Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above.</li> <li>▪ Abdomen tucked up when viewed from the side</li> </ul>
<b>IV</b>	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ribs palpable with slight excess of fat covering</li> <li>▪ Waist discernible when viewed from above, but not prominent</li> <li>▪ Abdominal tuck apparent</li> </ul>
<b>V</b>	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ribs not easily palpable under a heavy fat covering</li> <li>▪ Fat deposits over lumbar area and tail base</li> <li>▪ Waist barely visible to absent</li> <li>▪ No abdominal tuck—may see abdominal distention</li> </ul>

### Rechecks and weigh-ins

After you've put your pet on a weight loss program, it's critical that you determine if it's working. Each pet is different and may require changes in diet or routine before we find the correct approach. In general, your pet should be weighed every month until the ideal weight is achieved. If there is no significant weight loss (typically 1-2% weekly), then we'll pursue a new approach. Work closely with your veterinary healthcare team to reach your goals faster and more safely.

### Multi-pet households

What do you do if one of your cats is normal weight and the other is heavier? Or one of your dogs waddles while the other is svelte? Here are a couple solutions:

- 1) Feed separately. This is the ideal solution for multi-dog or multi-cat households. Feed the overweight pet its diet in one room, while feeding the other its food elsewhere.
- 2) After a prescribed time, generally 15-30min, pick up the food until the next feeding.
- 3) Don't leave food out while you are away.

## Exercise

**Dogs** can be great fun to exercise as they can get you out and about yourself. After your vet gives your dog a clean bill of health, start your pet on suitable exercise for beginners. Just like people who aren't used to exercise, dogs should start off slow. Moderately paced walking and swimming are a good way to start – these forms of exercise let your pet build their cardiovascular and muscle strength without putting undue stress on their joints. A daily 10-15 minute walking or swimming session is a good start and you can build to an hour a day if your pet seems up to it. If, after a few months your pet can handle long, fast walks without fatigue, he could graduate to jogging with you. Make sure that you watch out for the following:

- Keep a close eye on your dog: watch for any unusual signs of fatigue or trouble breathing. If your pet wants to stop, let him or her. Dogs that overdo it can suffer strained tendons or ligaments or other orthopedic problems.
- Safety first--keep your dog on a lead when you run. Even the best-trained dogs can run into the path of a car. And if you have to run when it's dark out, put reflectors on your dog's collar as well as on your clothes.
- Try to run on dirt paths or grass as much as possible. Gravel, concrete, asphalt, cinders and road salt can irritate your pet's paws.
- If it's freezing cold or hot and steamy out, either keep your run short or play a little indoor fetch instead. Hot weather caution: Panting is not as effective as sweating to cool your pet down. Do not exercise brachycephalic breeds (i.e. pug, shih tzu, bulldog, boston terrier, boxer, pekingese, etc) in hot weather.
- The more active your dog is, the more water he will require. Make sure your pet has enough fresh water before and after your run. If you're going for a long run, take some water along for both you and him.

Lodi Veterinary Hospital offers both mini (15-20min) or endurance (20-30min) sessions on the treadmill. Ask one of our staff for more information.

**Cats** are a little bit different than dogs. They're designed for short, frequent periods of intense activity, rather than longer, slower-paced exercise sessions. There are wide selection of toys you can buy to get your cat active, including "kitty trees" that will let your pet climb to the ceiling and mechanical animals that can be chased around the room. There are a few main ways you can entice your pet into activity:

- Things that can be hit. Anything light that moves easily across the floor can give your cat a chance to practice hitting and chasing. Balled up paper works well. Just make sure that she's not batting anything she could chew up or swallow.
- Things that can be chased (laser pointer, fishing rod type cat toys, strings). The end of a moving string should bring out the predator in even the most sedentary cat. Again, just make sure you pet doesn't swallow the string and never leave a cat unattended with string, yarn, etc.
- Things that can be climbed into. Empty boxes and paper bags are perfect for this. Remember plastic bags could cause suffocation.
- Things that can be scratched. Scratching stretches and tones the muscles in your cat's shoulders and back. A scratching post--or even a piece of cardboard or carpet--can keep your pet active without your furniture taking the brunt.
- Don't use your hand or fingers as "bait" or as the object of teasing.

**Most pets will achieve their ideal weight within six to eight months. If the process is taking longer than this, something needs to be changed. Together Lodi Veterinary Hospital can help your and your furry friend achieve his/her weight loss goals safely and successfully. Ask us about setting up a nutritional consult appointment to allow us to help your pet lose weight.**

Your veterinary health team members are: Tina Dziejior, CVT & Kristina Smith, CVT  
they may be reached at (608) 592-3232 or  
E- mail: lodivet@charter.net