

What is obesity?

Obesity is the most common nutritional disorder seen in cats and dogs. In Australia, 41% of dogs and 33% of cats are considered obese. 'Obesity' is commonly used as a term for being overweight, however more specifically it is a condition where a pet's weight is more than 15% above ideal.

Causes of obesity

We have little control over some contributing factors to obesity; e.g. breed, sex, heredity, and age. However, there are others which we can control, these being over-feeding and exercise. Most obesity is caused simply because a pet eats more calories than they need. This, in combination with a lack of exercise means the excess calories are stored as body fat.

Why pets overeat!

Owner influence

We often equate an animal's food requirements with our own leading to over-feeding and feeding the wrong foods.

Boredom or emotional stress

Hormonal influence

Neutered/desexed animals have a tendency to gain weight as their metabolism is slowed down, owners overfeed and not enough exercise (This however is not a good reason to not get your animal desexed).

Competition in multi-pet households

We often witness a dominant animal which may eat more than their fair share as a way of establishing a pecking order.

Risks for the overweight pet...

- Heart disease
- Susceptibility to infection
- Diabetes mellitus
- Neurological disorders
- Increased surgical & anaesthetic risk
- Respiratory problems
- Cancer
- Earlier onset of joint problems e.g. arthritis
- Skin problems
- Reproductive disorders
- Inactivity
- Decreased quality of life
- Premature ageing

Does your pet have a weighty problem?

If you answer 'yes' to any of the questions below, or if you think your pet is not at its optimum body condition, you may want to talk to your veterinary staff about a professional weight management program or sign up to our weight management support program www.petfit.com.au and get your pet started on a healthy new life.

Weighty Questions (Y or N)

- Do you have difficulty feeling your pet's ribs?
- Is there little or no 'waist'?
- Do you give your pet table scraps or left over's?
- Is your pet reluctant to exercise?
- Does your pet seem to tire easily with activity?
- Does your pet waddle when it walks?
- Does your pet keep eating so long as there is food in the bowl?
- Has your pet been desexed?
- Have you been told your pet is overweight?

A solution to the problem

If your pet has a weight problem, (this includes being underweight) Many Vets have the solution for you. They can offer a weight management program tailored to your pet, to help them reach and maintain their optimal body weight.

The inclusion of regulated exercise helps promote a total health focus for maximum benefit to your pet. The use of high quality veterinary diets means your pet will not miss out on any essential nutrients throughout their weight management program. For more information on a program, contact your local Vets Clinic.

Overweight pets are likely to:

- Live a less active and shorter life
- Be more prone to joint and mobility problems
- Develop skin problems and a lower resistance to infection
- Be at greater risk during surgery
- Be disinterested in exercise and play

If you have any further questions please ring or come in and see us for any help and advice.