



Obesity in dogs...

Despite years of warning owners about the health risks relating to dogs being overweight there has been no improvement in the number of dogs suffering from this condition.

Are we killing them with kindness? Some 40% of all dogs over the age of four are considered to be overweight in Australia; vets are seeing an increasing number of cases related to diabetes, joint problems, heat intolerance, heart and respiratory problems, liver disease, skin and general allergies and allergies,pancreatitis etc.

There are other health issues very similar to those of their heavy human friends. Expert opinions say that we are changing the natural diets of our cats and dogs too much, overloading them with treats and not exercising them frequently enough because just as we do, it is much easier to watch a program on TV (yes, there are specific DVDs for your dog or cat!).

As an example, a wolf in the wild would not survive if overweight. How would he catch his prey, if he were unfit and overweight, how would he survive?

Lean dogs have a much higher health status and they live longer. Dogs, like people, will live a longer and healthier life if their body weight is normal.

Just as our bone density increases when exercising and maintaining ideal weight, it is the same for dogs. Body fat mass, lean body mass, bone mass and glucose, glucose and insulin use, and cholesterol and triglyceride levels— are also properly maintained.

How do you know if your dog is overweight?

Dogs should have a waist and you should be able to feel the ribs with the palm of your hand at all times. Dogs that are overweight will tire more readily and

tend to pant more. If you have personally gone through the process of improving your fitness level then you will understand that being unfit means you fatigue more rapidly.

Dogs may become depressed if overweight whilst walking is pure enjoyment for any dog, they not only love to get out and romp around but the contact with their owners provides extra joy.

CAUSES OF OBESITY

Certainly there can be genetic predispositions associated with weight gain and obesity but generally speaking the most common cause is overfeeding and lack of exercise.

If a dog is fed too much according to its size or level of exercise then the excess fat will be stored in the body.

Be Aware of the temptation to Overfeed

If given the chance, dogs will eat whenever they get the chance, this is their natural instinct. In the wild they would eat when given the opportunity, and perhaps may not eat again for a number of days at a time. So dog owners may often ask the question 'is my dog getting enough' and then feed more because of the 'just in case factor'. If the dog is fed too much then he or she will end up unhappy, unhealthy and fat!

Dog food

I am sure everyone is familiar with the saying 'you are what you eat' it is no different for your dog. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of commercial foods being produced for dogs and cats, however these types of foods do not take into consideration the biochemical uniqueness of each animal.

These foods are not designed to suit the species. Clearly the anatomy and physiology of dogs has not changed, but the way we are being encouraged to feed our dogs has!

There are a number of additives, colours, flavours and preservatives added into dry dog food and canned food. The other problem associated with feeding these types of food is that You Have No Control over the nutrient content, it is predetermined and non changeable. This means if you are required to increase or decrease these feeds, you are also increasing and decreasing all the necessary nutrients without independent control of intake of protein, minerals, energy and vitamins.

Dogs have not evolved to chew their food, but rather they rip and tear it and swallow small pieces whole. Canned food may not be as easily digested because it is not delivered to the dog's stomach in a form that allows the dog's digestive system to work optimally. For the same, reason dry food is possibly even worse.

What type of food exists in the wild that is even vaguely similar to dry dog food?
Nothing.

Although dogs are carnivores and require fresh meat and bones they also can be fed small amounts of rice/pasta (as sources of carbohydrates), vegetables and a good daily supplement. This way of feeding is completely controllable and far less expensive than feeding prepared food. But most importantly this way is the most beneficial for your dog's health.

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