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Obesity in Pets

Obesity is one of the most common problems in companion animals. It is estimated that 40% of pets are overweight or obese. A pet is considered overweight if he or she is 10-20% over their ideal weight and obese if they are 20% or more over their ideal weight. For our pets, becoming obese isn't that difficult. A small dog or cat who ideally should weigh 10 pounds is considered obese after gaining only 2 pounds!

Several different things are responsible for the growing problem of obesity in pets. A pet begins to gain weight when their calorie intake exceeds how many they use in a day. This can happen by a pet simply being fed too much food, being fed a food that is too calorie dense, eating too many treats in addition to their normal diet, or simply because your pet's metabolism slows down as he or she ages. Obesity can also be the result of some medical problems such as hypothyroidism, so it is very important to work with your veterinarian when starting your pet on a weight loss program.

Achieving a healthy weight for your pet can be very beneficial to both you and your pet. Overweight and obese pets are at a much higher risk for developing diseases such as fatty liver disease, diabetes, joint and disc disease, cardiovascular problems, respiratory problems, and according to some studies, cancer. Overweight large breed dogs are also at a much higher risk for rupturing their cranial cruciate ligament which can be very painful and requires surgery to correct. The time and effort you spend to get your pet to or to maintain a healthy weight for your pet very much outweighs how much it costs to treat the injuries or diseases that they are at a higher risk of developing.