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Weight Management

The goal of this handout is assist owners whose dog needs to lose weight. Our objectives with weight management at WCVS are the following:

- To help owners understand why weight management is important to their pet's health.
- To assess the dog's nutrition, activity level, and suspected conditions that may be attributing to the pet's weight.
- To set goals for weight loss.
- To make recommendations for the dog's diet to help achieve these goals.
- To monitor the dog's weight and make adjustments as needed.

Overweight vs. Obesity

Overweight is defined as weighing 15% more than the ideal weight. Obesity is defined as weighing 30% more than the ideal weight. In either case the extra weight can have detrimental effects to your pet's health, and steps need to be taken to remedy the problem.

Obesity occurs when the intake of calories exceeds the expenditure of energy. There are some diseases that can attribute to obesity, such as hypothyroidism and Cushing's disease. Hypothyroidism can be easily ruled out with a simple blood test.

Spayed or neutered dogs will tend to gain weight more easily than those that are not spayed or neutered.

Health Problems associated with Obesity

- Orthopedic problems such as: Osteoarthritis, Cranial cruciate ligament ruptures, Intervertebral disc disease
- Diabetes
- Pancreatitis
- Cardiorespiratory problems such as: Tracheal collapse, High blood pressure, Increased workload on the heart, Increased effort to breath, especially when exercising
- Lower urinary tract disease
- Dental disease
- Cushing's disease (adrenal gland disorder)
- Some types of cancer
- Increased anesthetic risk
- Heat intolerance

Steps to Successful Weight Loss

1. Weigh your pet and assess body condition.
2. Set a goal for weight loss.
3. Assess the amount and type of food your pet receives. Account for all treats and table food that is given throughout the day. Also evaluate how your pet is fed (in meals or free choice).
4. Make adjustments to your pet's diet. In a few cases, this can be as simple as cutting out table scraps and treats, and measuring their food. However, in many cases, it will require a change to a prescription weight loss diet.
5. ALWAYS measure your pet's food! Be sure to count any treats that are given throughout the day. Each food has its own recommendations as to how much to feed. Lean towards the lower end of the recommendation. Every person that gives any food to your dog must understand the weight loss goals and the steps it will take to achieve these goals. Remember that the amount you feed will change as your pet loses weight.
6. Adjust feeding habits. Feed two meals a day, rather than leaving it out free choice. This also means separating each animal's food bowl so they don't steal from each other.
7. Exercise is important. Suggested activities include: Walks, swimming, playing fetch, Tug-A-Jug feeding toy.
8. Monitor your pet's weight at least every other week. Keep a chart to record your pet's weight. Remember progress may be slow but keep at it!

Body Condition Scoring

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a way to assess the amount of fat (or lack thereof) on your animal's body. It can be difficult to look at an animal and pinpoint the exact weight it should be. The ideal BCS is 5 out of 9. Take a few moments to read through each score criteria and then examine your own dog. You need to look at your pet from both sides and over its back. Also put your hands on your pet to see if you can feel certain bony prominences.

Score	Ribs	Vertebrae	Hips	Abdomen	Other Comments
1	Very evident	Very evident	Very evident	Obvious waist and abdominal tuck	No body fat; Obvious loss of muscle mass
2	Easily visible	Easily visible	Easily visible	Obvious waist and abdominal tuck	Minimal loss of muscle mass
3	Easily felt, may be visible	Tops of backbone visible over abdominal region	Prominent	Obvious waist and abdominal tuck	
4	Easily felt, minimal fat covering	Can be felt but no longer obvious	Still visible	Evident abdominal tuck; Waist still easily seen	
5	Easily felt without excess fat covering	Can be felt	Can be felt easily	Can still see abdominal tuck from the side and waist from above	
6	Can be felt but slight excess fat coverage	More pressure needed to feel them	More pressure needed to feel them	Waist observed but not prominent; abdominal tuck less apparent	
7	Difficult to feel, heavy fat cover	Not able to feel; Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail	Fat deposits evident	Waist absent or barely visible	
8	Not able to feel, under very heavy fat cover	Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of the tail	Heavy fat deposits	Waist absent; no abdominal tuck	
9	Massive fat deposits	Massive fat deposits over spine and base of tail	Massive fat deposits	Waist absent; Abdomen appears distended	Fat deposits over neck and limbs

Your Pet's Personalized Weight Loss Plan

Pet's Name: _____ **Today's Date:** _____

Current Diet, including all treats and table scraps:

Current Weight: _____ **Current BCS:** _____

Weight Loss Goal: _____ *Please remember that the goal may need to change depending on your pet's body condition score. Consult with your veterinarian as you approach your goal to determine if further measures need to be taken.*

New Diet Recommendation: _____

Amount to Feed: _____

Treats that may be given: _____

Recommended Exercise Activities: _____

Other Suggestions: _____

We would like to see you and your pet back in _____ weeks/months.
