

DOWNES

Veterinary Surgeons

Putting your pet on a diet

The reasons for obesity

Obesity is defined as being more than 20% above recommended body weight, and is one of the most common disorders affecting pets, with 24 - 40% of pets being classified as overweight.

The reasons for this high percentage include more confined and sedentary lifestyles, availability of highly palatable, energy dense pet foods and treats, and a strong human-animal bond which leads to over-feeding and snacking.

If your pet has to go on a diet, you must consider its overall lifestyle. The two most important factors to balance are food and exercise – **input** and **output**. An overweight pet usually has more input than output, so the commitment for your pet to lose weight **must come from you** – as you control your pet's eating habits and exercise.



Step 1

Review your pet's lifestyle, eating habits and exercise routine.

Step 2

Listen to the vet. Obesity can result in sickness, but it can be just as dangerous to suddenly change your pet's daily routine. One of our **vets** will discuss a programme of change with you, gradually altering your pet's nutritional requirements according to its level of activity.

Step 3

Stop snacks and treats. These are the number one cause of obesity in pets. A complete, balanced pet food will provide your pet with adequate nutrition and eating enjoyment. Often we feed our pets snacks because it gives **us** pleasure. Your pet will only beg for snacks if you have trained it to do so – and it does it **to please you!** If you use treats for training purposes or rewards, just give your pet less food at meal times.

Step 4

Exercise your pet more. Take your pet for lots of nice long walks. They don't have to be fast walks, you can take it easy. Provided your pet is physically able, exercise is essential to make them happy. You never know, it might make you feel better too!

Step 4

Review again. Keep reviewing how you and your pet are doing – and don't slip back into bad habits!

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If you're not sure how to do it – phone us up – we'll talk you through it!