

THE SKINNY ON PET OBESITY

by Carrie Donahue, DVM



I know it can be hard to keep from slipping your furry friend a treat whenever he or she looks up at you with *those* eyes. But thanks to those frequent treats, 56 percent of all dogs in America are, to put it simply, fat. In fact, the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention notes that veterinarians in the U. S. now classify more than 100 million pets as overweight or obese—up from 80 million just five years ago. The good news is that it's never too late to get your pup on a diet that supports healthy weight loss.

KNOW THE BASICS

Statistics tell us that only about 40 percent of pet parents realize their pet has a problem. That's why it's important to talk with your vet about your dog's weight and feeding routine, even if you don't think your pet is overweight. This can help ensure you are feeding your dog the right kind of food in the right amount for their breed and age. Keeping your animal at a healthy weight will save them from a wealth of weight-related problems in the future, including joint and hip issues.

But your dog's diet is just the start. Adding the right amount of exercise, fresh water, and a clean living area also contribute to overall health. Another thing to help your dog? The right probiotics.

PART OF THE PLAN – PROBIOTICS

Probiotics are instrumental in helping canines absorb nutrients from food, reduce upset stomach, and keep bowel movements regular. In addition to aiding digestion, these beneficial microflora can be counted on to reduce intestinal inflammation, leading to a reduction in gas and digestive upset.

Yet supplemental probiotics only work if they survive the journey through

the acidic stomach environment to reach the intestines. Dogs have a more acidic digestive environment than humans, by as much as 10 times. Two probiotic strains shown to be very acid resistant are *Bifidobacterium animalis* and *Bifidobacterium bifidum*. One research study in dogs with sudden diarrhea found that recovery time was reduced by 40 percent for those treated with *B. animalis* versus a placebo. To ensure your dog is getting the most from their probiotic, look for a supplement that provides a daily dose of 2.5 billion CFUs of *B. animalis* and *B. bifidum*.

Remember, keeping your pet at their ideal weight is part of being a good pet parent. Too many treats, the wrong foods, and encouraging eating for your dog based on *your* emotions can all be pitfalls that lead to an overweight pet. Commit to best practices for your pet's health today for many long and happy tomorrows. ■

THE WEIGHT-JOINT CONNECTION

Overweight pets often develop osteoarthritis or other joint problems that can cause painful inflammation and joint deterioration. Help your pet manage the discomfort while supporting joint and hip health with a pet-specific curcumin supplement that provides enhanced absorption. One good option is a form of curcumin that is combined with turmeric essential oil—often listed on labels as BCM-95 or Curcugreen. A curcumin formula that includes a standardized boswellia extract is another choice that can help a pet dealing with weight-related joint pain.



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pet owners to use a common-sense, holistic approach to health and well-being.