

## VETERINARY SURGEONS

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### Newsletter – WINTER 2018 Issue 40

#### CLINIC UPDATE

Business as usual here. It is great to see the passing of the winter solstice (and that wet wet June that made getting out and about all that more challenging). Even though it is still cold, the sunny, dry and calm days make it a pleasure to get out and enjoy our beautiful area, so rug up warm, make sure your dog is warm and vaccinated, and head off and explore our beautiful region! If you are going on a long walk, don't forget that even though its cold, your dog may still need a drink so carry some water for them too.

#### Weight Management in Cats and Dogs

By Pam, VN

Having a healthy weight is important for our pets to keep them healthy and mobile, and for us to enjoy a long and happy life with them.

##### The Basics:

Just like in humans, weight management in pets needs to consider what is eaten, how much is eaten, how much they move, and any health concerns that they may have.

Decreasing the amount of food offered is the best place to start. Most pet food packaging estimates how much an animal should be eating each day, though many animals don't need as much as is suggested. If you are already feeding this amount, try dropping that by 10%. Also be sure to remove access to other foods by shutting kitchen doors and keeping pets away when eating and preparing food, preventing the temptation to give them extras.

Cats may be finding food at other homes but if

you know this to be the case, consider decreasing what you feed them accordingly and perhaps give them other incentives to stay close to home, such as extra play and attention and staying inside at nighttime. You can also get tags to put on their collar saying "please do not feed me, I am on a special diet" or similar, which can deter others from giving them extra food.

If treats are used for training, set aside some of their daily allowance of kibble to use, or try using small pieces of things such as carrots, apple or banana. Remember that our pets are much smaller than us and so those little extras add up quickly for them, increasing their waistline! As long as we are feeding them sufficient food to meet their body's requirements, they don't need any more. The feeling of hunger is naturally built into us and our animals for survival, but if they are getting sufficient food it is not a dangerous feeling.

There are weight management foods available such as Royal Canin Satiety and Hill's Metabolic diet, which are available at our clinic are an important tool if you pet is 10% or more overweight. Talk to our friendly team about these and managing your pet's weight.

##### Making Mealtimes Fun:

For many of us, the hardest part of getting our pet to lose weight is the feeling that we are somehow depriving them. However, there are plenty of ways for us to keep spoiling our pets without overfeeding them. Most cats and dogs would love to spend more time with us. Setting aside some time each day to interact, cuddle and play with our pets can be a great way to keep them happy. Making their mealtimes into a game can mean that they get to spend time with us and exercise their nose and brain. One simple way to do this is to scatter their kibble around a designated area, such as outside



## Caring Vets, Healthy Pets

on the lawn. In the human world our pets get very used to having their food laid out carefully in one area, so meals are done and dusted quickly with no "hunting" effort needed. Scattering engages the nose to find the food, giving them a job and putting their brain to work. Using toys designed for foraging, such as kongs, or using food hidden in toilet rolls and cardboard boxes can make your cat or dog have to work for their food. Freezing food in dispensers such as kongs can also keep your pet busy, enjoying their food for longer. The internet has many great ideas for meal enrichment for pets.

#### Exercise

While exercise does not have as large a role in weight loss as diet does for our pets, it can definitely help to burn extra calories and keep them fit and mobile.

Keep in mind that if your pet is elderly, has arthritis, or has a heart condition, exercise needs to be carried out slowly and carefully. However, if your pet is young and otherwise healthy there are plenty of ways to keep them moving to assist with weight loss.

While taking dogs for walks on the street is helpful, keep in mind that running, jumping, climbing and swimming will also help to build muscle, which will help with weight loss in the long-term. Finding areas where your dog can safely be off-lead (keeping in mind their personality and behavior with other dogs, as well as council restrictions) such as dog parks, beaches and forests will keep exercise enjoyable and allow for a better workout than a street walk.

There are extra-long training leads available if your dog is not good at coming back when called! Toys for cats such as catnip mice and fluffy wands to chase can be great for giving your cat extra exercise, and can be used to have them climbing and jumping in the yard or living room.

#### Weigh-ins

We have scales at our clinic that can be used to weigh your pet regularly at no extra charge so that you can monitor their progress. This gives opportunity to evaluate if the current action is working or whether adjustments need to be made. Weighing once a month is sufficient for most pets, although every 2-3 weeks can be optimal for large dogs.

If you have any questions or concerns about your pet's weight, or would like more suggestions in terms of food or exercise, feel free to call the clinic and speak to one of the nurses there.

## PROMOTIONS

Buy any Frontline for Dogs and receive a 7 pack of Oravet Dental chews – while stocks last.

Save \$25 on any bag with a \$25 off sticker for Hills Dog food, 12kg and over – (Does not include Prescription food) – while stocks last.

<http://www.veterinarycentre.co.nz/pet-product-promotions.php>

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## DID YOU KNOW?

Since we are talking about weight management this newsletter, did you know that while animals are growing this is when the number of fat cells are formed. Then as adults, the fat cells fill and empty with fat. So if your puppy/kitten are kept lean while they are growing, if they do start to put on the weight, it's easier for them to lose it than an animal that has a lot of fat cells. You still need to carefully manage all animals weight!

Also – did you know that we see more clients coming in concerned that their dog is skinny, rather than that their dog is fat. This is often because someone has told them that their dog is too skinny while they were out walking. However almost without fail, these concerned clients have nothing to worry about. Their dogs are in the minority that are now in the normal weight range! Over 60% of dogs and cats are now overweight or obese and this has caused people to normalise pets being overweight.

Talk to us about your pets weight next time you visit, and let us help you maintain a healthy weight range for optimal health and well being of your pet.

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**We would love to hear your feedback on our newsletter. We thank you for your custom and we look forward to seeing you again soon.**



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**Caring Vets,  
Healthy Pets**