



The link between neutering and weight gain

Why are neutered pets more likely to become overweight?

Neutering is the best thing you can do for your pet, helping to prevent a number of health problems as well as unwanted pregnancies. However, neutering does change a pet's hormonal balance, which can cause their metabolism to slow down, reducing their energy requirements by around 30%, whilst increasing their appetite by as much as 25%.

This can make neutered pets up to three times more likely to become overweight than an unneutered pet.

Why does this matter?

- A healthy pet could outlive an overweight pet by as much as **two** years.
- Overweight pets are more than twice as likely to develop a number of diseases including diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure, urinary problems, skin conditions and heart disease.
- Overweight pets often experience a reduced quality of life as they are less able to enjoy exercise and playing with their owners, and often become more lethargic.

How can I monitor my pet's weight at home?

It is easy to check whether or not your pet is at its ideal weight using *body condition scoring*.

Body condition scoring uses a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very underweight and 5 being obese. A body condition score of 3 is considered the ideal weight for your pet.

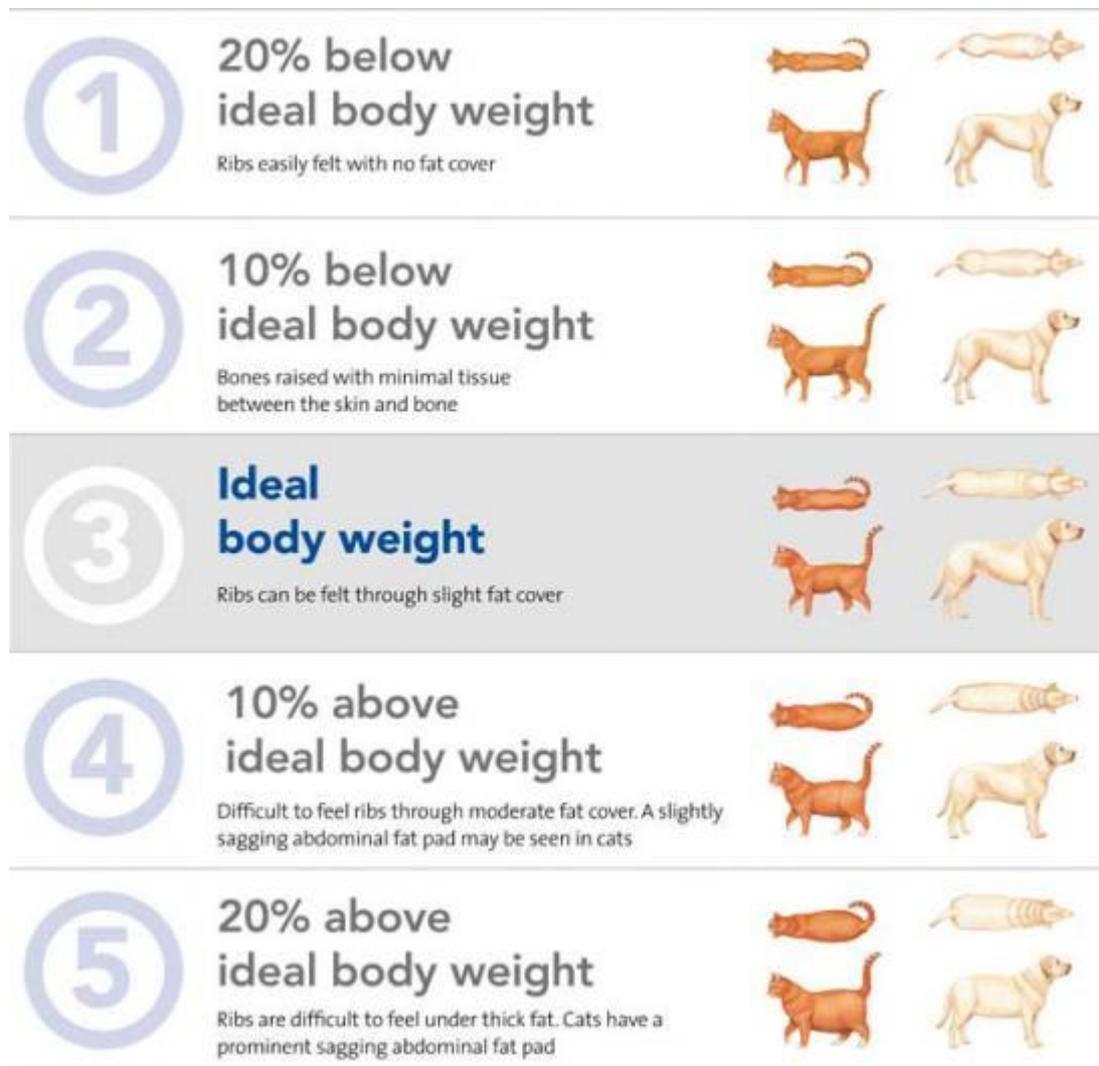
To work out your pet's individual body condition score, you need to do three checks:

- Rib check: run both your hands, palms facedown across your pet's ribcage on either side.
- Profile check: view your standing pet from a side-on angle, this is best done if you are level with your pet
- Overhead check: look down at your standing pet from an overhead angle

When in an ideal body condition, your pet's ribs can be felt without excess fat covering; the waist should be easily visible when viewed from above (giving an hour-glass

shape) and the abdomen should tuck up towards the pelvis, when viewed from the side.

Here is a chart showing the 1-5 scale of body condition scoring with 3 being the ideal.



How can I prevent my pet from gaining weight now that it has been neutered?

Being aware that your pet may start to gain weight makes it much easier to prevent.

Regularly weighing and condition scoring your pet can help you notice subtle changes in weight quickly, allowing you to take action before problems develop.

For some pets a change in diet is needed, especially those that are still on puppy or kitten food as these are very high in calories. We generally recommend using Hills Vet Essentials™ diets as these have been formulated for neutered pets to prevent weight gain after neutering. However, one of our nurses will be more than happy to discuss your pet's diet with you.

At Hillside Veterinary Centre we offer a free **post neuter weight check** with a nurse

to all pets that we neuter. This appointment takes place a couple of months after your pet's operation and allows us to quickly spot any potential weight problems before they have had time to develop into a serious problem.

You don't need to remember to make this appointment, as we will phone you to remind when the appointment is due.

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