

Why weight matters

Did you know that...

- A healthy pet could outlive an overweight pet by as much as two years.
- Overweight pets are more than twice as likely to develop diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure, skin conditions and heart disease.
- Up to 50% of dogs and cats in the UK are now overweight or obese.
- Neutering a pet can reduce its energy requirements by as much as 30%, but increase its appetite by as much as 25%, making it more prone to weight gain.
- 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.
- To a 10kg dog, gaining 1kg of weight is the equivalent of the average person putting on between 5 and 7kg (11 to 15 pounds) – that's a lot!
- To a 4kg cat, gaining 1kg of weight is the equivalent of the average person putting on between 14 and 19kg (31 to 41 pounds) – wow that's seriously a lot!!



Why do some pets become overweight?

- Diet: overeating is the main reason why pets become overweight. As with people, when an animal consumes more calories than it uses, its body stores those excess calories as fat. The more fat that accumulates, the heavier the animal becomes.
- Exercise: the amount of exercise or activity your pet gets makes a big difference to how much he or she weighs. Less activity means a greater risk of becoming overweight.
- Age: as pets become older, they often become less active, meaning that they need fewer calories.
- Breed: certain breeds are more likely to put on weight than others.
In **dogs** this includes Labradors, Golden Retrievers, Cairn Terriers, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Dachshunds, Basset Hounds, Shetland Sheepdogs, Beagles and Cocker Spaniels.
In **cats** this includes Sphynx, Birman, British Shorthair, Manx and Persians.
However, all breeds of dog and cat can become overweight.

- Neutering: changes in energy requirements after neutering can make a pet more prone to weight gain.
- Medical problems: very occasionally weight gain is associated with a medical disorder.

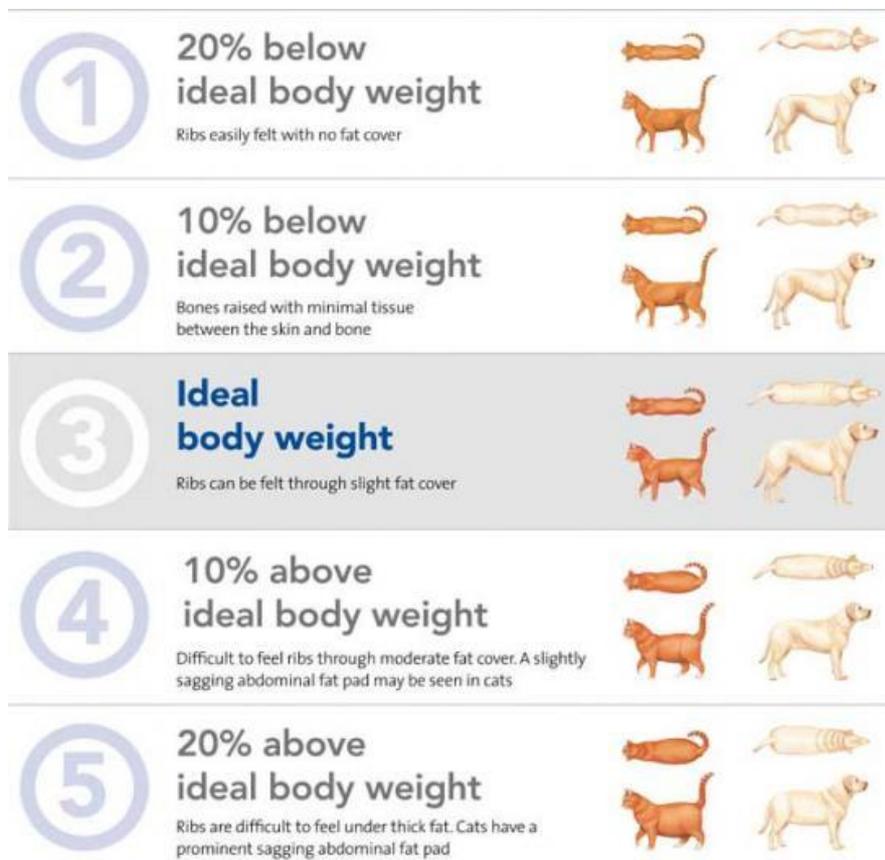
How does your pet shape up?

It's easy to check whether or not your pet is at his/her ideal weight using body condition scoring. Body condition scoring uses a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very under weight and 5 being obese. A body condition score of 3 is considered ideal weight.

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.



My pet is overweight, what should I do?

With the correct help and advice, it is possible to return your pet to a healthy weight, and to maintain it.

At Hillside Veterinary Centre we run one-to-one **Weight Watchers Clinics**.

For a one-off registration fee we will take full details of your pet's feeding and exercise regime and produce a realistic diet and exercise plan, to suit the specific needs of your pet and to fit in with your lifestyle.

We will also provide a weight watchers pack, with all of the information you will need to help you to understand your pet's diet. This includes a free activity feeder to help your pet to become more active.

We then carry out regular weight checks, to ensure that the diet is going as planned and make adjustments if necessary. All these follow-on appointments are free of charge.

Once your pet has reached their target weight, we will provide the advice and support you need to maintain their weight going forward.

For more information or to enrol your pet in our Weight Watchers Clinics, please call us at the surgery and ask to speak to Gemma on 01202 698899.

For related reading see our other fact sheets:

- Rewarding your dog – healthy and unhealthy treats
- Rewarding your cat – healthy and unhealthy treats
- Exercise tips for your dog
- Exercise tips for your cat
- Diet tips for your dog
- Diet tips for your cat

Disclaimer: Hillside Vets' website is intended to be used only as a guide and information resource, not as an alternative to a veterinary consultation and advice. Nothing contained in this website should be construed as medical advice or diagnosis. For specific healthcare advice please discuss the particular symptoms and circumstances of your pet with your vet.