

Obesity in pets causes serious health issues

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Obesity in the pet population has been on the rise, and has become a very common life-threatening and life-shortening disease in both dogs and cats. New research from the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention has found that at least 50 percent of dog and cat populations are overweight or obese. This means that there are millions of overweight or obese pets having health issues related to their weight. Many owners actually don't realize that their pet is overweight. When they look at a weight chart, they pick the overweight picture as the normal weight category and the normal picture is what they think is the underweight category. There are many conditions that occur secondary to being overweight and they are pretty much the same for dogs and cats.

Orthopedic issues

The extra weight puts extra pressure on both joints and ligaments. These patients are more prone to anterior cruciate ligament tears, which usually require surgery to repair. The weight can also increase the likelihood that the pet will struggle with osteoarthritis of any joint, with the hips being the most common joint affected. This is seen a lot in big dogs like Labrador and Golden Retrievers but also in smaller breeds like Cocker Spaniels and Bichon Frises and even cats. These animals will struggle with mobility and will be uncomfortable and in pain. They can also develop back issues such as intervertebral disc disease (bulging discs) just like humans. The Dachshund is a breed that is overrepresented in regards to disc disease and it is made worse by obesity. It has been shown that weight reduction can significantly help with their mobility and alleviate pain.

Diabetes

This disease does affect dogs and cats, but it is much more common in the cat population. The vast majority of the time the cat is overweight. Cats usually require daily insulin shots and special food to manage the diabetes and even then there can be further health issues as a result. Obesity can shorten a pet's life by at least two years. Conversely, if a pet goes on a weight loss program and loses weight, he or she will begin to act younger, feel better and likely live longer. In two weeks: How to help your pet lose weight.