



## Grafton Dog Obedience Club Inc.

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### WEIGHT CONTROL FOR YOUR DOG

Overweight and obesity are problems for many dogs just as they are for humans and overweight/obesity in dogs can lead to the same health problems found in humans.

An overweight dog has a reduced life expectancy; increased risk of heart disease, increased risk of back and joint problems, and also has a greater risk of developing diabetes and other diseases. Excess weight is especially harmful for young, growing dogs and elderly dogs.

How can you tell if your dog is overweight?

Viewed from above, your dog should have a distinct "waist". If he is the same width from his ribcage to his hindquarters - he is overweight. You should also be able to easily feel his ribs. If you can't easily feel his ribs - he is overweight.

If your dog is overweight, what can you do to help him regain his once trim figure?

Achieving an ideal weight comes down to balancing the amount of energy your dog consumes (in the form of food) against the amount of energy he uses up (in the form of exercise). Ultimately if your dog consumes more energy than he expends, he will gain weight. So you have some choices - either reduce the energy consumed, increase the energy expended - or both.

If you decide to reduce your dog's energy consumption, you may be able to switch to a diet that contains less fat/calories so your dog can lose weight but still get the same volume of food each day. Or you may realise that your dog is eating too much and simply reduce the quantity of food he eats each day. Another alternative, if you feed a home prepared diet, is to switch to less fatty meat and bones or reduce the quantity of meat and increase the amount of vegetables you feed.

Maybe your dog gets lots of treats or snacks throughout the day so that his energy consumption becomes excessive. You can switch to smaller treats, feed less fattening treats or reduce the size of your dog's meals to compensate for the treats he eats. If your dog gets lots of unhealthy, fattening treats and snacks, it may be better to switch to healthier treats.

If that all sounds just too hard (you simply can't resist those pleading brown eyes!), then increasing your dog's exercise may be the best option for you. Increasing the distance your dog walks each day or adding in a vigorous game of "fetch" or "tug" can all increase your dog's energy output. Increase your dog's exercise gradually, especially if your dog is very overweight, very young, or elderly.

It is better for your dog to gradually lose his excess weight and improve his fitness.

If your dog is elderly, or has health problems, you may need to discuss an appropriate weight loss program with your vet.

Maintaining your dog at a healthy weight and a good level of fitness can add years to his life.

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