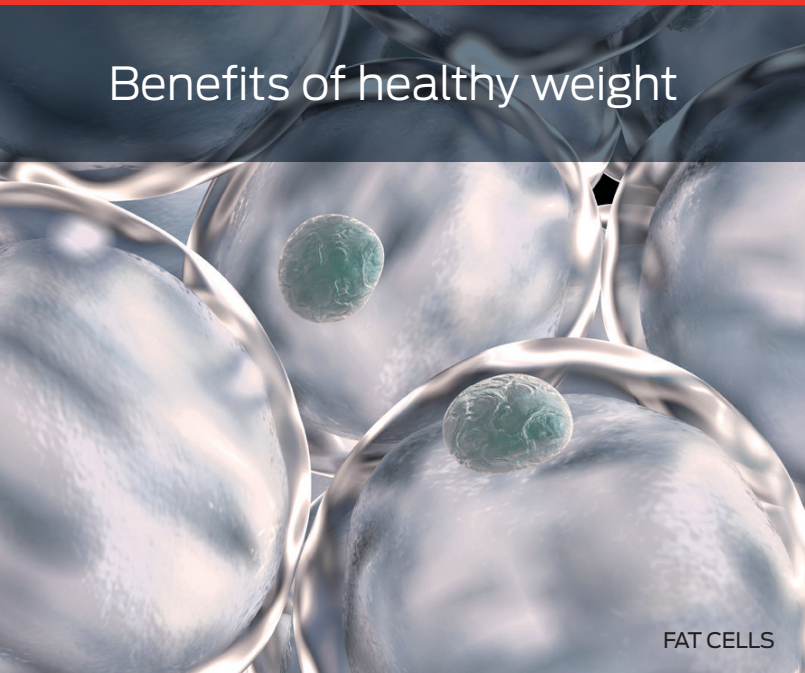


HOT TOPIC

Benefits of healthy weight



In focus

Although there are many benefits to maintaining a healthy weight in pets, many owners do not understand what a healthy weight is or the benefits for pets.

The Purina Institute provides the scientific facts to support your nutritional conversations.

let's
takeback
the conversation.

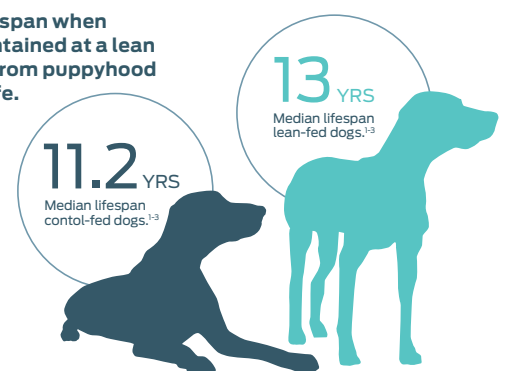
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What are the health benefits of keeping my pet at a healthy weight?

Research shows that pets who maintain a healthy weight enjoy a significantly longer, healthier life. Restricting caloric intake without any essential nutrient deficiencies delays aging and extends lifespan in all species.¹ Reducing caloric intake affects the overall incidence of many diseases, including cancers and several late-life diseases, increasing pet longevity.²⁻⁴

In a landmark Purina Study, forty-eight Labrador Retrievers were tracked throughout their lifespan. The study revealed that maintaining an ideal body weight from puppyhood throughout life helped increase the lifespan of the dogs by 1.8 years, and significantly delayed the onset of chronic diseases associated with aging, like osteoarthritis.²⁻⁴

Increased lifespan when dogs are maintained at a lean body weight from puppyhood throughout life.



How can I tell if my pet is at a healthy weight?

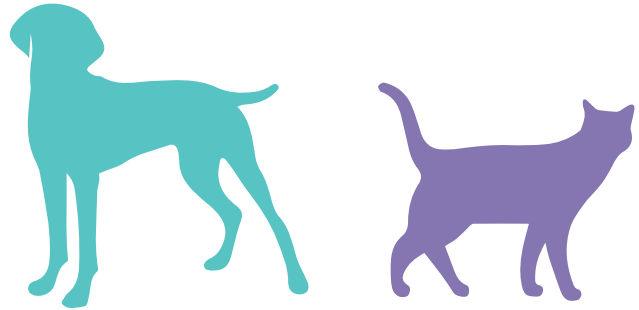
In addition to body weight, the body condition scoring method (BCS) is a practical way of estimating the amount of body fat coverage and the pet's optimal body condition, regardless of breed or body weight.⁵ Visual assessment and palpation of the ribcage provide an easy method of evaluating body composition and weight concerns.⁶ The validated, 9-point BCS system developed by Purina for both dogs⁷ and cats⁸ can be a powerful tool in starting a conversation with owners about achieving and maintaining a healthy weight for pets.

BODY TYPE	BODY CONDITION SCORE	
	DOG ⁷	CAT ⁸⁻⁹
Underweight	1-3	1-4
Ideal	4-5	5
Overweight	6-7	6-7
Obese	8	8
Morbidly Obese	9	9

Will neutering affect my pet's risk for becoming overweight?

In both dogs and cats, neutering results in the desired decrease in sex hormones, which in turn can lead to both metabolic and behavioral changes. A potential undesired side effect of neutering may be an increase in appetite and decreased activity and energy expenditure.¹⁰⁻¹¹ These changes increase a pet's risk for becoming overweight if caloric intake is not adjusted appropriately. Generally, however, the health and behavioral benefits of neutering and spaying outweigh the risk of possible weight gain in pets.

Tips for Assessing Body Condition



Hourglass shape when viewed from above

Minimal fat pad on tummy when viewed in profile

Easily feel the ribs

Easily feel the ribs

Tummy tuck when viewed in profile

Hourglass shape when viewed from above

Can my pet's age affect their weight?

Age is an important factor affecting the energy (caloric) needs of pets.¹² During their growing years, when they are more active and still developing, dogs and cats are less likely to be overweight.^{6,13} In adult pets, weight gain is more common because they may consume more calories than they are burning due to decreased metabolism and activity level. Owners with low-activity, adult pets may need to consider reducing their pet's caloric intake in order to keep them at a healthy weight.

In senior dogs that are starting to slow down, weight gain is also a concern due to decreased activity levels. On the other hand, cats aged 12+ are susceptible to marked weight loss.¹⁴ Therefore, understanding how to identify healthy weight in pets at each life stage is key to maintaining their health and increasing their longevity.

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