

10:09 AM December 06, 2010

AVImark®
The leader
in veterinary
software**\$199/month interest-free financing.**

- Home
- Industry News
- Web Exclusives
- Vet School Spotlight
- Education Series
- Current Issue
- Columns
- Departments
- People
- Vet Industry Blogs
- Products
- Calendar
- Footnotes
- Classified Ads
- Advertise With Us

 [BOOKMARK](#)   

Breaking News

- [FDA Approves First Drug to Prevent Fescue Toxicosis in Horses](#)
- [Scil Animal Care Company Adds CE Courses for 2011](#)
- [Dechra Grows Vet Pharmaceutical Business with UK Acquisition](#)
- [Mare Ovulation Drug Gets FDA Approval](#)
- [Texas A&M to Unveil Veterinary Emergency Team](#)

Advertiser Links

Ads by **Google**

[Portland Coupons](#)

1 ridiculously huge coupon a day. Like doing Portland at 90% off!

www.Groupon.com/Portland

[Healthy, Natural Dog Food](#)

The best variety of all-natural, dry, canned and raw dog foods!

www.loyalbiscuit.com

[Well Point Veterinary](#)

An Integrative Approach For Animal Health Care

www.wellpointvet.com

[Ask a Vet Online](#)

11 Veterinarians Are Online! Ask a Question, Get an Answer ASAP.

Pet.JustAnswer.com

[Super Care For Your Pets](#)

40+ Years of Experience Specials on Puppy and Kitten Pkgs.

www.lakeregionanimalhosp...

The Flip Side

Posted: November 30, 2010, 1:40 p.m., EDT

Pets living primarily outdoors need more calories during winter months to maintain a healthy weight, nutritionists say. This fact may be unknown to the owner and overlooked by the veterinarian considering many pets now enjoy indoor life.

"If kept in a cooler environment, pets' energy expenditure actually increases with the increased calories that are burned to keep them warm," says Sally Perea, DVM, Dipl. ACVN, a senior nutritionist with Natura Pet Products Inc. "Some pets kept outdoors may even put on extra weight as a way to increase their fat layer to stay warm. With this said, most pets are going to be kept in an indoor environment, so they should not have these additional energy needs."

Statistics

Overweight and obese stats (according to the Association of Pet Obesity Prevention:

- An estimated 15 percent of U.S. dogs and cats are obese. That's 26 million obese pets.
- An estimated 45 percent of U.S. dogs are overweight or obese.
- 35 million U.S. dogs are estimated to be overweight or obese; 6.7 million are obese.
- An estimated 58 percent of U.S. cats are overweight or obese.

Veterinarians should ask clients whether their pet is kept indoors or outdoors. The response should be documented on the animal's record.

"Feed diets that are appropriate for the pet's activity level," says Amy Dicke, DVM, a technical services veterinarian at Procter & Gamble Pet Care. "Some couch potatoes may need to be placed on reduced-fat diets early in their adulthood. There is disparity in owner recognition of the importance of keeping their pet at an appropriate weight. In fact, many owners don't recognize when their pet is overweight, and too often an obese body condition has occurred before they register concern."

Exercise

Owners know pets need exercise rain or shine, but that means more than what they get on bathroom breaks.

"For many dogs, the only exercise they get may be their normal walks," says Brent Mayabb, DVM, manager of education and development at Royal Canin. "If the walks are decreased, then the pets may have no other form of exercise. Some products help make walking in cold weather better for dogs, such as coats and boots to help protect their paws, but ultimately, it's up to the owners to do it. Obesity is insidious. The changes are so gradual that they usually escape the owner's attention until they're pretty far advanced."

Nutrition is gradually gaining the respect it deserves in preventing medical ailments, experts say, but since pets' weight can parallel that of their owner, who often don't make the best decisions for themselves, it's up to veterinarians to be their patient's advocate.

"Knowing that different people take in information in different ways, visual aids like body condition scoring charts in the waiting or exam rooms and television programs can help reinforce the message," Dr. Mayabb says. "What I've found most effective in is having a veterinary technician speak to the pet owner. After the veterinarian has finished the appointment, the technician can restate some of the things the vet said as well as spend more time and answer questions. This seems to have a stronger impact on the owner."

Indoor Games

Dr. Ernie Ward suggests that owners do these weight-reducing activities with their pets:

- **High and low:** This game is like squats for your dog or cat. With a kibble of food in one hand, have your pet lie down or sit. For dogs, lower the treat and coax your dog to jump up and follow it. Then quickly lower the reward again and return the dog to a sitting or lying position. An ideal "high and low" is when your dog explodes upward and immediately lays down again. Repeat this three to five times before giving the food. For cats, place their food on a counter or table (add a pinch of tuna or salmon for extra incentive) and have the cat jump up to get it. Return the bowl to the floor and repeat several times.
- **Hide and seek:** This is similar to fetch but without the throwing. The owner shows the dog a favorite toy, then lead the dog into another room while hiding the toy from the dog's view. Make the hiding place obvious at first, like the toy peeking out from under a pillow. When the dog finds the toy, praise it and give a kibble of food. Hide the toy in more challenging places as the game continues.
- **Find the food:** Cats are natural predators. To tap into the instinct and encourage a cat to get its move on, try dividing the food into small bowls placed throughout the house. Have the cat watch as you "hide" the bowls. Your cat will hunt the food throughout the day. This is one of the best ways to get corpulent cats on their feet and burning calories.
- **Follow the leader:** Show the dog or cat a favorite toy and call him/her to you. Walk around the house with the pet following. Go as fast as you like.
- **Obstacle course:** Set up an indoor obstacle course made of empty drawers, buckets, pillows, boxes, or broomsticks. Have the dog jump, crawl and navigate around furniture and objects for an intellectually stimulating activity. Playtime is about togetherness, not the quality of your toys.
- **Remote-controlled toys:** Technology has provided pet owners an almost endless supply of remote-controlled toys. Many dogs and cats will chase a remote-controlled car or interactive talking toy. Look for a pet-friendly toy or car that has few small parts.

Your Email: **SEND**

POLL

Do you ever recommend commercially prepared raw diets to clients?

- Yes, all the time
- Only in certain cases
- I would if I knew it was safe for pet and owner
- No; risks outweigh benefits
- Never; it isn't safe.

Vote[Previous Poll Results...](#)**Veterinary Practice News**
Digital Edition – Available Now!**CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE****Subscriber Services****For complete Breed & Species profiles****Click Here**

- All States
- Alabama
- Alaska
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- California

Read the full article in Veterinary Practice News on Page 23. To subscribe to the magazine click [here](#).