

Weight Management Handbook

A practical guide to
running successful
weight consultations



Introduction

Helping pet owners to achieve and maintain a healthy weight for their pet can be a challenging task, and one that requires time and dedication from all parties. Achieving successful weight loss can be one of the most rewarding experiences for the healthcare team who assist pets on their journey to fitness. For the owner and their pet, losing weight is a positive, life changing experience.

This handbook has been created to help you set-up and run successful weight consultations in your practice and includes a step-by-step guide of what to cover during the perfect weight consultation.

Remember that the Hill's team are here to support you with a variety of clinic materials and in-house training where required.

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The whole practice

However dedicated one individual might be to making a success of weight clinics, it's important that the whole healthcare team understands the importance of pets being at a healthy weight and how being overweight can impact quality and longevity of life. It can be easy to shy away from telling an owner that their pet is overweight, but it is important that every member of the healthcare team acknowledges their role in addressing this common disease.

For weight clinics to be successful, pet owners must be told when their pet is overweight and then be referred to the Weight Management Team. Veterinary recommendation is widely acknowledged as the single most effective recommendation that can be made in veterinary practice, and it is therefore essential that the vet advises the owner when an overweight pet is seen and makes a referral. If the vet

doesn't bring a weight problem- or indeed any other health issue- to the owner's attention it will often result in an unwillingness to recognise the condition even when pointed out by other members of the health care team.

Before starting your clinics, we would suggest a practice meeting to ensure that all staff are aligned with what the practice wants to achieve. This gives everyone the opportunity to participate and to express any concerns that they may have about how the clinics are run.

TOP TIP

Veterinary recommendation is the most important recommendation. Therefore it is essential that vets tell owners when their pets are overweight and refer them to the Weight Management Team.





The Basics: Who and When?

For many staff, in particular the nursing team, taking ownership of weight consultations can offer tremendous job satisfaction and personal growth, while helping the practice to really make the most of these highly skilled individuals.

Who?

Not all staff will feel comfortable with the idea of running their own consultations, and for some it will be necessary to provide additional training in the area of consulting skills. Our advice would be, if someone doesn't want to run clinics, don't push them into doing so. Some staff though, are at their best when engaging with owners and will be keen to take the opportunity to get involved.

When?

Weight consultation times will be dependent on the practice schedule and availability of a consulting space. Initial consultations for overweight pets will usually require a minimum of 30 minutes and it's important that a suitable area is made available for this. Most follow up weigh-ins will take just a few minutes – assuming that the desired results are being seen- and therefore an appointment may not be considered necessary.

Although many owners will favour having just one individual in charge of their pet's weight loss schedule, it may be wise to involve more than one member of the team. This allows good continuity of care when staff are absent and where a case may prove more challenging, two heads can often be better than one!

TOP TIP

Make sure you allocate sufficient time for an initial weight consultation. Failure to do so will often result in poor owner compliance.

To Fee or not to Fee?

Deciding whether or not to charge for your service is something for the practice team to make a decision on, and there are certainly valid arguments to support each side of this discussion. Running weight consultations is a timely task, using valuable resources in terms of space, time and staff.

It is well recognised that many people put a greater value upon something they have paid for, and are perhaps more likely to take their pets' weight loss more seriously if they have paid for it. Many practices do charge for this service and still recruit many owners, while others might include this service as part of a practice health scheme.

On the other hand, charging may put some clients off, and certainly it could be argued that this service can bring valuable footfall and increased OTC and other revenue streams rather than a consultation fee. Where clients choose to use your service but buy their food elsewhere, we would suggest that a fee is charged for your time.

Return on investment

Finding the time and resources to set up any type of clinic within a busy practice can be difficult. However, it's important to consider the additional revenue that such a service may bring and in many cases, additional staff or tools can more than pay for themselves over time.

Imagine just recruiting 1 new slimmer a week and the impact this would have on your practice footfall and sales!

Month 1 

Month 2 

Month 3 

Month 4 

Month 5 

Month 6 

The Perfect Weight Consultation

Introduction

Once an owner acknowledges that their pet has a weight issue we can begin to address it. It is important to recognise that failure to successfully convince an owner that their pet is overweight will inevitably result in a failure to resolve it. The list below summarises the 10 points for discussion throughout the initial weight consultation. We will look at each one in more detail.



Acknowledgement of obesity



Why do owners over-feed their pets?



What is currently being fed? (Food diary)



Exercise (Exercise diary)



Choosing a weight loss food and setting a target weight



Treats



Support materials



Managing expectations



Inspire: Success stories



Booking the next appointment

Acknowledgement of obesity

Breaking the news: Your pet is fat! Telling an owner that their pet is overweight can sometimes be challenging. Many owners are unaware that their pet is overweight and may not believe you.

There is never an excuse for ignoring a debilitating, life-threatening disease. As healthcare professionals, it is always your responsibility to alert owners to any disease process that has an impact upon their pet's quality of life. This frequently means we must tell an owner that their pet is overweight.

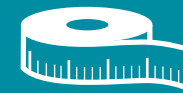
There are a number of tools available to help you clearly make your case to owners if their pet is overweight. Later in this handbook, we will look at how to use the Body Condition Score (BCS) and Body Fat Index (BFI) systems to assess a patient's weight and to calculate target weight. These tools are also extremely useful when talking to owners and to demonstrate the correct body shape for their pet.

Many owners believe that indulging their pet with high calorie foods will bring their pet pleasure. This combined with a failure to recognise normal body shape and a lack of awareness of the many problems associated with obesity, results in over-feeding and weight gain.

TOP TIP

It is important to acknowledge that a pet becoming overweight will often occur as a result of misplaced kindness by the pet owner.





Acknowledging the big issue

Where owners fail to acknowledge excess weight is a problem, here are some suggestions on how to demonstrate this to an owner.

Get the owner to hold the equivalent excess weight themselves during your consultation:

- If the dog is 25% overweight, and the owner weighs 12 stone (168lbs, 76kg) get them to hold 2 x 10kg sacks of food throughout the whole consultation!
- Ask the owner of a cat that is 1kg overweight to wear a back pack during the consultation. For the average 10 stone woman (140lbs, 63kg) the pack should weigh about 15kg
- The average x-ray gown weighs 6kg. Ask an owner to wear one to demonstrate how debilitating carrying that weight can be

SPARK A CONVERSATION.

Telling an owner that their pet is overweight can be a difficult but necessary conversation. However, there are a number of methods you can use to help you start. For example, we know that a pet's genetic make-up can contribute to weight gain, making it a more likely but still correctable and avoidable condition if the right steps are taken.

"Are you aware?"

Use social media or waiting room time to raise awareness before the conversation (e.g. dedicated weighing area).

"No shame"

Focus on how genetic predisposition, diet and lifestyle can all contribute to weight gain. If a pet is consuming more calories than they use, the result will be weight gain. For a pet to lose weight, they must consume fewer calories than they need in order for them to lose the energy they are storing as fat.

"It is guilt free"

Be confident and positive. Metabolic nutrition is an advanced weight loss solution: pet parents can continue feeding their pets almost as they normally do.

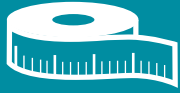
"Here is your plan"

Give a written recommendation. For ease, use a digital platform dedicated to customised recommendations, such as HillsQuickReco.com.



TOP TIP

A way of demonstrating excess weight to an owner can be to use packs of butter or similar;
4 packs of butter = 1 kg



Weight Loss Tools

If an owner is present during a weight management consultation, then we would hope that they have agreed that their pet is overweight. However, this might not always be entirely the case and even when it is, we can use a variety of tools to support our advice that weight loss is required.

Weight alone is not an indication of a healthy or unhealthy weight. Indeed, we often see people of similar heights and weights, where one might be considered a healthy weight and the other may not. It is the way that fat and muscle are distributed that gives us a true indication of an individual's weight status. Body Condition Scoring (BCS) allows us to make this physical assessment of tissue distribution AND to put a score against it. This score can then be recorded, along with the weight of the patient, to give us an accurate detail and history of a patient's weight status.

BCS is a skill that can be easily learned and once mastered, takes very little time – probably less than taking a pet to the scales to be weighed. It is also a skill that can be easily demonstrated to an owner, allowing them to regularly assess their pet's body shape throughout or following a weight loss plan, on the next page you will find standard Body Condition Charts to use as reference.

TOP TIP

If your practice has a waiting room television, you can download Hill's videos showing owners how to BCS their pet. For further information on Hill's videos speak to your Territory Manager

Visual and physical check

Ribs prominent and easily felt with no fat cover.

Bones are raised with minimal tissue between skin and the bone.

Ribs visible and easily felt through slight fat cover.

Difficult to feel ribs through moderate fat cover. Slightly sagging abdominal fat pad in cats.

Difficult to feel ribs through thick fat cover. Cats have a prominent sagging abdominal fat pad.

Body Condition Score

1

VERY THIN

Body Condition Score

2

UNDERWEIGHT

Body Condition Score

3

IDEAL WEIGHT

Body Condition Score

4

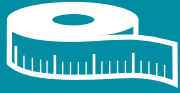
OVERWEIGHT

Body Condition Score

5

OBESE





Body Fat Index

The Body Fat Index (BFI) is a tool developed at the University of Tennessee. It works in a similar way to the BCS but allows a greater efficacy in calculating target weight, particularly in pets who are sitting within the BCS category of 5 out of 5.

Another simple and easily repeatable record of body shape can be to take some basic body measurements. We would suggest 3 or 4 standard measurements:

- ① The neck
- ② The widest part of the chest
- ③ The waist
- ④ In some breeds, such as a Labradors, a fourth measurement of the tail base can also be useful

See page 22-25 to calculate Body Fat Index

TOP TIP

Measurements of the tail base can be useful in some breeds e.g. labradors.





Why do owners over-feed their pets?

What difference does it make?

Does it matter why?

If we are to help and support owners throughout the weight loss programme, it's important to understand what motivates them to feed and to gain greater insight into the relationship each owner has with their pet.

We have illustrated 2 scenarios on the following pages, both parties over feed their dogs but the motivations behind the over-feeding are completely different and therefore the way these clients are dealt with will be different. They will both result in the feeding of calorie restricted diets but the language and recommendations for feeding will not be the same.





Scenario 1:

Mrs Jacobs, an elderly widow, lives alone with her Beagle, Smudge. They spend 24 hours a day together, 365 days of the year. Smudge is Mrs Jacob's best friend and indulging Smudge with treats and toys gives Mrs Jacob's immense pleasure and a real sense of purpose in life.



Scenario 2:

Mr Ellis is a 32 year old, single man living in Putney with his 3 year old Retriever, Dave. Mr Ellis acquired Dave when he was living with his girlfriend but when they split up, she couldn't take Dave so Mr Ellis did. He works about 60 hours a week and likes to play golf at least one day each weekend. He feels bad about leaving Dave alone so much and not giving him all the exercise he needs, so instead he compensates by giving Dave numerous treats that he can eat while Mr Ellis is out.



TOP TIP

Clients will have different reasons for overfeeding their pet, it's important to treat each case differently and with sensitivity.



What is currently being fed?

This might seem like a simple question to ask, but many owners have no idea what the name of the food they feed is, or how much they feed.

As well as the owner not having an idea of the main food fed, they may also not know about the snacks and treats they give in addition. It may prove useful to ask owners to bring the packaging with them to your initial consult. This gives us an opportunity to compare the manufacturer's guidelines with what the owner has been feeding. Has the owner been feeding above the recommendation or has the food manufacturer recommended too much?

Here is a simple calculation to see how many calories a dog or cat needs each day to **keep them at a ideal body weight**.

- ① Calculate their RER or 'resting energy requirement'.
RER = 30 x bodyweight in kg + 70
- ② Then multiply the RER by 1.8 for a dog or by 1.2 for a cat to reach the Daily Energy Requirement or DER for a healthy active pet.
Dog: DER = RER x 1.8
Cat: DER = RER x 1.2

So for a 20kg dog we would do the following calculation:

$$\text{RER} = 30 \times 20 = 600 + 70 = 670$$

$$\text{DER} = 670 \times 1.8 = 1206 \text{ kcal needed per day for maintenance in a healthy adult}$$

For less active or neutered Dogs DER will need to be reduced to RER x 1.4 for weight maintenance.



The most common cause of obesity is the feeding of high calorie treats, so it's important to identify what percentage of calorie intake is made up of treats.

Many pet foods will state the calorific content on the packaging so you can work out how many calories the owner has been giving their pet. Where this information is not given, it is useful for you to do this calculation.

Look at the label to see how much of each of the energy giving nutrients is in the food. The energy giving nutrients are proteins, fats and carbohydrates.

Protein and fat will be stated as a percentage, e.g. 7% protein. This is stated 'as fed' which means as it is presented to the pet.

Carbohydrate is not stated but can be calculated by totalling the label stated percentage of fat, protein, ash, fibre and water (if water isn't listed, we make an assumption of 10%) and subtracting this number from 100. This gives you the percentage carbohydrate value. The calorie value of protein, fat and carbohydrate are as follows:

- Protein 3.5kcal/g
- Fat 8.7kcal/g
- CHO 3.5kcal/g

A diet stating 7% protein on the label provides 24.5 kcal of protein per 100g (7×3.5)

A diet stating 5% fat on the label provides 43.5 kcal of fat per 100g (5×8.7)

A diet containing 3% carbohydrate (as calculated by the label) provides 10.5 kcal of carbohydrate per 100g (3×3.5)

So in total the diet contains 78.5 kcal per 100g as fed, ($24.5 + 43.5 + 10.5$)

It can often prove useful to ask owners to keep a food diary, where they can keep a written record of everything that their pet eats throughout the day. This ensures that nothing is forgotten, and once again gives an invaluable insight into an owner's feeding habits and the relationship they have with their pet.

Food diaries are available from your local Hill's Territory Manager.



Exercise

Many owners over-estimate the calories expended by their pet and so some detailed questioning is required to get an accurate picture of a pet's activity. Along with the food diary, an exercise diary can prove a valuable addition to the weight consultant's tool kit.

Dogs:

- How long does the exercise last?
- Is the exercise off the lead?
- What distance is covered?
- Does the dog, or indeed the owner, get out of breath on the walk?
- What kind of play does the owner do with the pet?
- How frequently is the pet exercised?

Where a pet does significantly increase their exercise, this will result in increased muscle mass. This is a good example of where body fat loss may not result in total body weight loss and where tools such as BCS or basic body measurements prove invaluable in demonstrating to an owner that their pet is on the path to becoming a healthy shape.

Cats:

Encouraging a cat to exercise more can be very difficult but just a small amount of exercise can help with weight loss. Feeding cats in a variety of locations, using feeding toys or throwing kibbles to 'hunt' are examples of how we can get a cat to move more.

TOP TIP

Where a torch light is used for cats to 'hunt', always ensure the game results with the light landing on something. This means we avoid the frustration of the cat never getting to catch their 'prey'.



Choosing a diet and setting a target weight

Choosing a diet

Hill's first recommendation for weight loss diets is the Hill's Prescription Diet Metabolic range. This is a diet which uses nutrigenomic technology to transform a pet's gen profile from a fat-storer to a fat burner by using a synergistic blend of ingredients which kick start the body's natural ability to burn excess fat. It is important to inform owners that this diet is not a light diet and will not leave their pets hungry. This will help with owner compliance when transitioning onto a new diet regime.

Weight loss diets are often high fibre diets, and this can result in increased faecal output so it is recommended that owners are warned of this. In some cases, where this is undesirable, it may be necessary to seek alternative foods. However, it is well recognised that increased fibre gives tremendous benefits in terms of improved satiety.

There are many conflicting reports of the benefits of feeding wet vs. dry foods for weight loss. It is suggested that the choice should be down to what the pet owner usually feeds and what their pet is accustomed to. It may be beneficial to feed small meals throughout the day rather than one large meal, for a number of reasons. For example, increased energy expenditure during digestion, improved satiety for the pet and a decreased feeling of deprivation to the owner. Feeding toys can prolong the feeding experience and also provide all the benefits previously listed.



Hill's first recommendation for weight loss is Hill's Prescription Diet Metabolic, or when the pet may also be suffering from concurrent Mobility or Urinary tract disease, Hill's Canine Prescription Diet Metabolic + Mobility, Hill's Prescription Diet Metabolic + Urinary or Prescription Diet Feline Metabolic + Urinary Stress. Overweight diabetic cats are recommended to be fed Hill's Feline Prescription Diet m/d. For pets suffering from obesity and other diseases, speak to your Hill's Territory Manager or call the Hill's Technical Helpline.



Setting a target weight

Setting an accurate target weight is important for the desired weight loss to be achieved.

For weight loss we use the following calculation:

Cat: $0.8 \times \text{RER} = \text{Kcals per day}$

Dog: $1 \times \text{RER} = \text{Kcals per day}$

Below is an example of where failure to set the correct target weight can result in significant over feeding of the weight loss product.

6kg cat fed for 4kg target (when truly 3.5kg target)

3.5kg cat = $0.8 \times \text{RER}$ - 142 kcals per day

4kg cat = $0.8 \times \text{RER}$ = 159 kcals per day

12% increase in calories over the amount required for weight loss.



Calculating the target

THE BODY FAT INDEX (BFI) can help you set the target weight more accurately. Following weighing and a physical examination of the pet, simply select the appropriate risk factor for that pet and using their current weight identify their target weight. Pets must always be fed for the target weight, regardless of the amount of weight to be lost.

Canine and Feline BFI Charts for can be found over the next 4 pages

It is not recommended that cats or dogs lose more than 2% of their total bodyweight during a 7 day period. Occasionally more may be achieved- particularly at the start of the weight loss programme- but should this continue it would suggest a need to increase the feeding ration for that pet. Weight loss above 2% total bodyweight a week would suggest a significant loss of muscle in addition to fat. This is not considered healthy, and also increases the risk of weight gain following the weight loss period.

In fact, anticipated total bodyweight loss would be more realistically set at around 1% a week for dogs and 0.5% a week for cats. For a 6kg cat, this might mean a weight loss of around 30g a week throughout the weight loss plan, so having suitably sensitive scales for smaller pets is vital to monitor weight loss sufficiently.

Once the daily feeding ration has been calculated, it should be recorded in the patient's file and the owner should be given written instructions to take away. For some owners it may be necessary to measure out the daily rations into feeding bags for them to take away. It is important to remember that as a pet loses weight, the anticipated weekly weight loss reduces too. For example, 1% of total body weight loss in a pet that currently weighs 50kg is 500g, but when that pet's weight gets to 40kg, 1% of total bodyweight is now 400g. Throughout the weight loss plan we must regularly recalculate the desired weekly weight loss to reflect this.

We would recommend that food is always weighed on a scale rather than using a measuring cup.

For more information on Hill's weight diets see our support literature or speak to your Hill's Territory Manager.

DID YOU KNOW

Cats and dogs should lose a maximum of 2% bodyweight in a 7 day period.

Canine Body Fat Index (BFI) Risk Chart

20	30	40	50	60	70
16-25% body fat	26-35% body fat	36-45% body fat	46-55% body fat	56-65% body fat	>65% body fat
					
Ideal Weight	Overweight	Obese	Obese	Obese	Obese
Ribs Slightly prominent. Easily felt. Thin fat cover.	Ribs Slightly to not prominent. Can be felt. Moderate fat cover.	Ribs Not prominent. Very difficult to feel. Thick fat cover.	Ribs Not prominent. Extremely difficult to feel. Very thick fat cover.	Ribs Not prominent. Impossible to feel. Extremely thick fat cover.	Ribs Unidentifiable. Impossible to feel. Extremely thick fat cover.
Shape from above Well proportioned lumbar waist.	Shape from above Detectable lumbar waist.	Shape from above Loss of lumbar waist, broadened back.	Shape from above Markedly broadened back.	Shape from above Extremely broadened back.	Shape from above Extremely broadened back, bulging mid-section.
Shape from the side Abdominal tuck present.	Shape from the side Slight abdominal tuck.	Shape from the side Flat to bulging abdomen.	Shape from the side Marked abdominal bulge.	Shape from the side Severe abdominal bulge.	Shape from the side Very severe abdominal bulge.
Shape from behind Clear muscle definition, smooth contour.	Shape from behind Losing muscle definition, rounded appearance.	Shape from behind Rounded to square appearance.	Shape from behind Square appearance.	Shape from behind Square appearance.	Shape from behind Irregular or upside down pear shape.
Tail base bones Slightly prominent. Easily felt.	Tail base bones Slightly to not prominent. Can be felt.	Tail base bones Not prominent. Very difficult to feel.	Tail base bones Not prominent. Extremely difficult to feel.	Tail base bones Not prominent. Impossible to feel.	Tail base bones Unidentifiable.
Tail base fat Thin fat cover.	Tail base fat Moderate fat cover.	Tail base fat Thick fat cover. May have a small fat dimple.	Tail base fat Very thick fat cover. Fat dimple or fold present.	Tail base fat Extremely thick fat cover. Large fat dimple or fat fold.	Tail base fat Extremely thick fat cover. Large fat folds or pads.



Finding a dog's ideal weight

Follow these 3 steps to determine a dog's ideal weight

- 1 Weigh the dog
- 2 Determine the dog's body fat percentage using images and descriptors on the reverse side
- 3 Establish ideal weight using this chart

Current weight (kg)	Ideal body weight (kg)					
	16-25% body fat	26-35% body fat	36-45% body fat	46-55% body fat	56-65% body fat	>65% body fat
4	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5
5	5.0	4.4	3.8	3.1	2.5	1.9
6	6.0	5.3	4.5	3.8	3.0	2.3
7	7.0	6.1	5.3	4.4	3.5	2.6
8	8.0	7.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	3.0
9	9.0	7.9	6.8	5.6	4.5	3.4
10	10.0	8.8	7.5	6.3	5.0	3.8
12	12.0	10.5	9.0	7.5	6.0	4.5
14	14.0	12.3	10.5	8.8	7.0	5.3
16	16.0	14.0	12.0	10.0	8.0	6.0
18	18.0	15.8	13.5	11.3	9.0	6.8
20	20.0	17.5	15.0	12.5	10.0	7.5
22	22.0	19.3	16.5	13.8	11.0	8.3
24	24.0	21.0	18.0	15.0	12.0	9.0
26	26.0	22.8	19.5	16.3	13.0	9.8
28	28.0	24.5	21.0	17.5	14.0	10.5
30	30.0	26.3	22.5	18.8	15.0	11.3
33	33.0	28.9	24.8	20.6	16.5	12.4
36	36.0	31.5	27.0	22.5	18.0	13.5
39	39.0	34.1	29.3	24.4	19.5	14.6
42	42.0	36.8	31.5	26.3	21.0	15.8
45	45.0	39.4	33.8	28.1	22.5	16.9
48	48.0	42.0	36.0	30.0	24.0	18.0
51	51.0	44.6	38.3	31.9	25.5	19.1
55	55.0	48.1	41.3	34.4	27.5	20.6
59	59.0	51.6	44.3	36.9	29.5	22.1
63	63.0	55.1	47.3	39.4	31.5	23.6
67	67.0	58.6	50.3	41.9	33.5	25.1
71	71.0	62.1	53.3	44.4	35.5	26.6
75	75.0	65.6	56.3	46.9	37.5	28.1

Feline Body Fat Index (BFI) Risk Chart

20	30	40	50	60	70
16-25% body fat	26-35% body fat	36-45% body fat	46-55% body fat	56-65% body fat	>65% body fat
					
Ideal Weight	Overweight	Obese	Obese	Obese	Obese
Face Minimal fat cover. Prominent bony structures. Head & Neck Prominent distinction between head & shoulder. Loose scruff. No scruff fat. Sternum Prominent. Very easy to palpate. Minimal pectoral fat. Scapula Prominent. Very easy to palpate. Ribs Prominent. Very easy to palpate. Abdomen Loose abdominal skin. Easy to palpate abdominal contents. Tail base Prominent bony structure. Easy to palpate. Minimal fat cover. Shape from the side Moderate to slight abdominal tuck. Shape from above Marked hourglass.	Face Slight fat cover. Defined bony structures. Head & Neck Clear distinction between head & shoulder. Loose scruff. Slight scruff fat. Sternum Defined, slightly prominent. Easy to palpate. Slight to moderate pectoral fat. Scapula Defined, slightly prominent. Easy / Very easy to palpate. Ribs Not prominent. Easy to palpate. Abdomen Loose abdominal skin with minimal fat. Easy to palpate abdominal contents. Tail base Slightly to minimally prominent bony structure. Palpable. Slight fat cover Shape from the side No abdominal tuck. Shape from above Slight hourglass / Lumbar waist	Face Slight to moderate fat cover. Defined to slight bony structures. Head & Neck Clear to slight distinction between head & shoulder. Loose to snug scruff. Slight to moderate scruff fat. Sternum Minimally prominent. Palpable. Moderate pectoral fat. Scapula Slightly prominent. Easy to palpate. Ribs Not prominent. Palpable Abdomen Obvious skin fold with moderate fat. Easy to palpate abdominal contents. Tail base Minimally prominent bony structure. Palpable. Slight to moderate fat cover. Shape from the side Slight abdominal bulge. Shape from above Lumbar waist.	Face Moderate fat cover. Slight to minimal bony structures. Head & Neck Minimal distinction between head & shoulder. Loose to snug scruff. Moderate scruff fat. Sternum Poorly defined. Difficult to palpate. Thick pectoral fat. Scapula Minimally to not prominent. Palpable. Ribs Not prominent. Difficult to palpate. Abdomen Heavy fat pad. Difficult to palpate abdominal contents. Tail base Poorly defined bony structure. Difficult to palpate. Moderate to thick fat cover. Shape from the side Moderate abdominal bulge. Shape from above Broadened back.	Face Thick fat cover. Minimal to no bony structures. Head & Neck Poor to no distinction between head & shoulder. Snug to tight scruff. Very thick scruff fat. Sternum Not prominent. Extremely difficult to palpate. Extremely thick pectoral fat. Scapula Not prominent. Difficult to palpate. Ribs Not prominent. Extremely difficult to impossible to palpate. Abdomen Very heavy fat pad; indistinct from abdominal fat. Impossible to palpate abdominal contents. Tail base Bony structure not prominent. Extremely difficult to palpate. Very thick fat cover. Shape from the side Severe abdominal bulge. Shape from above Severely broadened back.	Face Very thick fat cover. No bony structures. Head & Neck No distinction between head & shoulder. Tight scruff. Very thick scruff fat. Sternum Not prominent. Impossible to palpate. Extreme pectoral fat. Scapula Not prominent. Impossible to palpate Ribs Not prominent. Impossible to palpate. Abdomen Extremely heavy fat pad; indistinct from abdominal fat. Impossible to palpate abdominal contents. Tail base Bony structure not prominent. Extremely difficult to palpate. Extremely thick fat cover. Shape from the side Very severe abdominal bulge. Shape from above Extremely broadened back.



Finding a cat's ideal weight

Follow these 3 steps to determine a cat's ideal weight

- 1 Weigh the cat
- 2 Determine the cat's body fat percentage using images and descriptors on the reverse side
- 3 Establish ideal weight using this chart

Current weight (kg)	Ideal body weight (kg)					
	16-25% body fat	26-35% body fat	36-45% body fat	46-55% body fat	56-65% body fat	>65% body fat
3	3.0	2.6	2.3	1.9	1.5	1.4
3.5	3.5	3.1	2.6	2.2	1.8	1.5
4	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.7
4.5	4.5	3.9	3.4	2.8	2.3	1.9
5	5.0	4.4	3.8	3.1	2.5	2.0
5.5	5.5	4.8	4.1	3.4	2.8	2.2
6	6.0	5.3	4.5	3.8	3.0	2.4
6.5	6.5	5.7	4.9	4.1	3.3	2.6
7	7.0	6.1	5.3	4.4	3.5	2.7
7.5	7.5	6.6	5.6	4.7	3.8	2.9
8	8.0	7.0	6.0	5.0	4.0	3.1
8.5	8.5	7.4	6.4	5.3	4.3	3.2
9	9.0	7.9	6.8	5.6	4.5	3.4
9.5	9.5	8.3	7.1	5.9	4.8	3.6
10	10.0	8.8	7.5	6.3	5.0	3.7
10.5	10.5	9.2	7.9	6.6	5.3	3.9
11	11.0	9.6	8.3	6.9	5.5	4.1
11.5	11.5	10.1	8.6	7.2	5.8	4.3
12	12.0	10.5	9.0	7.5	6.0	4.4
12.5	12.5	10.9	9.4	7.8	6.3	4.6
13	13.0	11.4	9.8	8.1	6.5	4.8
13.5	13.5	11.8	10.1	8.4	6.8	4.9
14	14.0	12.3	10.5	8.8	7.0	5.1
14.5	14.5	12.7	10.9	9.1	7.3	5.3
15	15.0	13.1	11.3	9.4	7.5	5.4
15.5	15.5	13.6	11.6	9.7	7.8	5.6
16	16.0	14.0	12.0	10.0	8.0	5.8
16.5	16.5	14.4	12.4	10.3	8.3	6.0



Snacks and Treats

The most significant contributing factor to weight gain in cats and dogs is the giving of snacks and treats. Be they commercially prepared pet treats or homemade/human foods. The giving of treats is an extremely important part of the pet/owner relationship in many homes and should never be under-estimated.

It is best to acknowledge the importance of this action and to find more appropriate 'rewards' than to request that an owner ceases this behaviour. First we must identify why owners choose to treat and when.

Don't ask 'Do you feed treats?'

Do ask 'What treats and extras do you give?'

This 'gives the owner permission' to give treats and encourages honesty. Just as with any diet, we can calculate the calorific content of snacks. Many owners are genuinely surprised when they see what percentage of their pet's daily recommended intake is taken up with treats.

We can help owners choose more appropriate treats or to use some of their pet's designated daily ration.

Vegetables such as carrots can provide useful alternatives but can still contain substantial calories for pets. A carrot can easily be cut into 50 pieces to make 50 treats! This fulfils the owner / pet interaction but without the calories.

Help owners consider alternative rewards for their pets. Going for a walk or having play time with a pet can not only reinforce the relationship with the pet but can also be a way of increasing energy expenditure.





Support Materials

Hill's can help support your weight management consultations with a variety of materials. This can help you promote the service to both existing and potential clients.

Think beyond your waiting room! Advertising weight consultations on your website, Facebook account or in a local paper can help draw potential business through your door.

There are also numerous materials for your clients, to help support them throughout their pet's weight loss journey and beyond. Ensure your client has support literature to take away and that all instructions are written down for the client to take home with them. Create a Hill's Quick Reco recommendation for your client to reinforce conversations in clinic and offer a discount off their food purchase. Many clients need the opportunity to review what they have been told in the quiet of their own home. Make sure the contact details for the weight team are included in the support pack so that any concerns can be expressed and addressed.

If, at the end of the consultation, you sense any hesitation or concern on behalf of the owner, **never ignore it**. Ask questions to identify what the issue is. For example,

- 'I'm sensing that you have some concerns?
- Is there anything that you're not entirely happy with?'

DID YOU KNOW

Failure to acknowledge and overcome any issues will almost certainly result in poor client compliance and an unsuccessful slimmer.





When the pet and owner leaves your consultation they should have:

- ✓ The name and contact details of the weight consultant
- ✓ Written info on current weight and target weight
- ✓ Written feeding instructions
- ✓ The selected diet and where desired, an appropriate treat
- ✓ An 'Introducing a new food' leaflet
- ✓ A product leaflet and disease leaflet
- ✓ Client booklet including weight chart
- ✓ Written information regarding exercise
- ✓ A booked follow up appointment
- ✓ Hill's recommendation and coupon

TOP TIP

If you already use Quick Reco, our on-line tool for personalised recommendations, you'll already be getting a customised nutrition recommendation and money off coupon.



Managing Expectations

Satiety

Although weight loss diets are designed to minimise hunger, any weight loss programme where a calorific deficit is created will, inevitably, result in some degree, of hunger. This usually reduces after about 14 days but will remain, to some extent, throughout the weight loss period. Many owners become particularly concerned about this and it can be a common cause of poor compliance. Some simple questioning can help you overcome this.

Did the pet beg for food prior to starting the diet? Usually the answer to this question is yes, and it is the resulting rewards that have resulted in the pet being obese in the first place! Remind owners of this. Many pets, and indeed people, will eat not as a result of being hungry, but because they enjoy eating. When a pet has been rewarded for this, the behaviour is reinforced.

Many pet owners confuse their pet's contact with them as a request for food. This is commonly seen in cat owners who think that a cat rubbing around their legs is hungry. This is often a failure of an owner to recognise normal cat behaviour. In fact their cat is probably just saying hello but over time, the cat may learn that saying hello results in being fed.

Timeplan

Be realistic! If a cat is 50% overweight then the reality is that it will probably take about 18 months for that individual to reach their target weight. This is assuming that they consistently lose weight at the desired rate, throughout the whole schedule.

In such cases, it may be better to set intermittent target weights that can be achieved more quickly. **However, the feeding ration must always be based upon the final target weight.**



TOP TIP

Dieting isn't easy and you should tell owners to expect that their pet may be hungry at first. However you can reduce this with an appropriate diet.



We've hit a wall!

It is quite normal to have periods with the the desired weight loss followed by periods of plateau, and then again more weight loss. There are a number of things we can do during these periods of no weight loss.

- Re-evaluate the feeding plan and make a 10% reduction if required
- Look at ways to increase energy expenditure
- Look closely at compliance. Is the client buying the food at the expected frequency? Too often indicates over feeding. Not often enough indicates the food is not being fed exclusively.
- Check measurements. Is body shape changing favourably?

Rewarding Success

Acknowledging milestones in the weight loss plan is a great way to keep owners motivated. A simple, computer printed certificate is an affordable, easily customised reward that can

be used to mark even the smallest achievements along the way. Having a 'Pet Slimmer of the Month' display in your waiting room is another, cost effective way of celebrating a patient's weight loss.

Honesty

Obesity is serious, debilitating disease that significantly reduces quality of life. All any owner wants is for their pet to live as long and as happy a life as possible.

Ask owners 'How do you think Sooty feels about being overweight?'

Losing just a small percentage of weight can significantly improve an overweight patient's quality of life. For example, improvements in the clinical signs of arthritis or a reduction in respiratory distress.

We should never ignore obesity in any pet. It is our responsibility to alert the owner to the condition and to offer a solution in the form of a weight management programme.

FACT

Studies have proven that a dog's lifespan is reduced by an average of 2 years by being overweight.

(Kealy et al, 2002)



Certificate of Completion

This is to certify that:

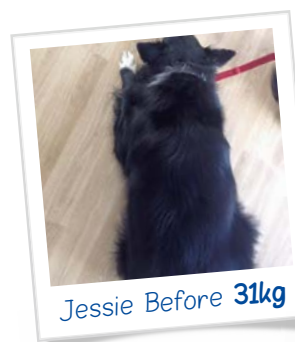
.....
achieved a healthy target weight of and lost a total of

Signature: Date:

Inspire

Starting a weight management plan can seem like a daunting, unachievable task.....a long and difficult road stretching ahead. To make that road a more attractive path to tread we need to show owners that their quest is a realistic one, that we will support every step of the way.

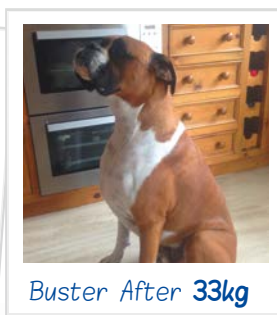
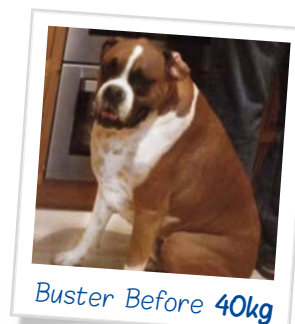
What better way to demonstrate this to owners than with some success stories. Before and after photos along with owner testimonials can truly inspire owners and help drive them towards success. So get your camera at the ready for the next recruit!



We adopted our dog, Jessie, from the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) in December 2014. At that point she weighed 31kg! We visited our vets to get Jessie checked over and Hill's Prescription Diet Metabolic food was recommended. The weight steadily fell off over the next 5 months until Jessie reached her target weight of 18kg.

The weight loss was easy with this food – Jessie loved it! She is now on Hill's Neutered dog food which keeps her at her target weight. She is a different dog now, and has since climbed 15 Munros (Scottish hills over 3,000ft high) and is always ready for a long walk. Her shiny coat and bright eyes tell how much healthier she is too since losing 13kg.

Gavin McGregor (Jessie's Owner)



"We run weight clinics every day they have been a great success and we are so happy Buster won the regional prize! Buster came to us at 40kg and lost an impressive 7kg on Metabolic diet. His owner's are so happy with his weight loss and said he is like a new puppy running around with boundless energy."

Caitriona Higgins RVN, Palmerstown Veterinary hospital, Dublin



Book the next appointment

It might seem like an obvious, simple step to take, but remembering to book the follow-up weight consultation is an essential way of ensuring we keep in touch with that owner.

Always book the next appointment! Should an owner fail to show, always get in touch. A quick phone call or email can bring that client back to you.

Our suggestion is that pets return for a weight check every 14 days. If an owner is reluctant to do so, gently challenge their commitment to the weight loss plan. If owners are willing to do so, a weekly weight check is even more desirable.

Failure to see the anticipated weight loss should result in a reduced feeding quantity being recommended, and this will need to be reviewed in another 14 days. This should also be the case if weight loss of greater than 2% total bodyweight is seen, which suggests an increase in the feeding ration is required. Once again, this will need to be reviewed after 14 days. Any new feeding recommendation should be recorded in the patient's history and given in writing to the owner.

DID YOU KNOW

36% of owners who failed to return for a follow-up, would have done so if the practice had called to remind them.



Weight Maintenance

A pet that was once obese will always be a pet that is predisposed to being overweight and will usually need to be on a restricted calorie diet for the rest of their lives. This means a maintenance calculation of around 1.2 x RER for dogs and around 1 x RER for cats. Feeding a diet that allows for this calorific reduction is recommended. There are a number of options available and you can help the owner choose the most appropriate option.

✗ Feeding less of a 'normal' diet (Not recommended)

This option may mean feeding the desired reduction in calories but is not recommended as feeding a below the manufacturer's recommendation will also result in a failure to meet nutritional needs.

✓ Feeding a 'light' diet (Recommended)

This option suggests feeding a diet specifically designed to provide a reduction in calories, while meeting all the pet's nutritional needs. It is a practical solution to long term weight control, and there are even options that maintain the nutrigenomic benefits provided by Metabolic.

DID YOU KNOW

50% of all successful slimmers regain their lost weight. So stay in touch, even when the pet hits their target weight.



Hill's Vet Essentials NeuteredDog and NeuteredCat are recommended products for weight maintenance

Gold standard

Not all weight loss diets are suitable for weight maintenance, Hill's Prescription Diet Metabolic diets are, and offer the perfect solution for long term weight management in pets that have successfully dieted on this food, or many others. Metabolic diets contain all the nutrients required while restricting calorific intake and maintaining favourable gene expression. Diabetic cats that have successfully slimmed on Hill's Prescription Diet m/d should remain on this product, fed at a ration for weight maintenance.

Whichever weight maintenance diet is selected, it is important that the pet continues to be weighed regularly. This is particularly important during the time when a maintenance ration is being tried out, where ideally the pet should continue to be weighed at least every 2 weeks. Once a ration has been determined and the frequency of repeat weight checks can drop to once a month. Most owners buy their pet's food once a month and so getting their pet weighed at the time of repurchase can prove a convenient solution to the owner.

As already highlighted, any pet that has been overweight in the past, will continue to be predisposed to weight gain for the rest of their life, and therefore, their weight will need to be managed for the rest of their life. This will help ensure that the pet lives as long and as happy a life as possible. Half of all successful slimmers regain their lost weight, so maintaining contact is essential to maintain weight loss.



Hill's Prescription Diet Metabolic range.

Risk Factors

There are many factors that put pets at an increased risk of obesity and is it our responsibility as healthcare professionals, to alert owners to this. Why wait for the pet to become overweight? Where a risk factor is identified, this should be brought to the owner's attention and a nutritional recommendation made.

- **Breed predisposition**
Many breeds are known for their propensity to gain weight, perhaps the most common being Labradors.
- **Neutered Pets**
Following neutering, a pet's calorific needs reduce, while their appetite increases as does their propensity to lay down fat.
- **Indoor Pets**
Pets living indoors tend to do less exercise and therefore expend fewer calories.
- **Specific disease processes**
Pets that may have to be on long term corticosteroids or have debilitating diseases such as arthritis are also predisposed to weight gain.

These are just a few examples of where it is recommended that the veterinary healthcare team alert an owner to their pet's predisposition to weight gain and make an appropriate nutritional recommendation along with regular weight checks.



Thank you for taking the time to read the handbook and we hope that you found it useful. We would like to wish you every success in the running of your weight clinics.

Would you like to provide feedback or contribute to the handbook? We would love to hear from you Tel: 0800 282438 / 1-800 626 002.

Got a difficult case?

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