

A New Survey Weighs In On Pet Obesity

(NAPSA)—Much as with humans, too many calories and a lack of exercise can spell trouble for pets.

Unfortunately, it appears many people have a difficult time acknowledging that their dog is overweight, according to a nationwide survey conducted by Purina Dog Chow Light & Healthy*. While only 22 percent of owners surveyed believe their dog is overweight, the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) reports that a staggering 53 percent of dogs are actually overweight or obese. This perception gap may be a key factor behind what APOP considers to be an epidemic in pet obesity.

Even when owners acknowledge that their four-legged friend may be tipping the scales, the recent survey suggests that some owners still struggle with how to best tackle the problem. Of those surveyed who believe their dog is overweight, almost one-fourth (24 percent) admit they don't know how they should manage their dog's weight and 22 percent have taken no action to do so.

Assessing the Issue

A key challenge for many may lie in understanding how to tell if their dog is overweight in the first place. While 85 percent of those surveyed believe they know the correct signs to determine if their dog is at a healthy weight, nearly half (41 percent) rely on their veterinarian to determine if their dog is actually overweight.

While veterinarians can be an excellent resource for advice when managing a pet's weight, it's important that owners know how to properly assess their dog's weight as well. The Purina Body Condition System, for instance, provides guidelines to help determine if the dog is at a healthy weight, including checking the profile and overhead view of the dog, and feeling for the dog's ribs.



Regular exercise and a complete and balanced diet are keys to helping your dog maintain a healthy weight.

Nutrition Matters

Just like humans, dogs need to consume fewer calories than they burn in order to lose weight. While some owners may achieve this by simply reducing their dog's portion size, this can leave the pet feeling less than satisfied. Instead, people can opt for a low-calorie food for their dog, such as Purina Dog Chow Light & Healthy, which has 20 percent fewer calories than Purina Dog Chow Complete & Balanced. It includes a tender and crunchy kibble blend, is steam cooked at the start and is made with high-quality protein sources including real chicken.

Get Moving

Regular exercise can also help maintain a dog's weight and extend his healthy years. Of dog owners surveyed who report having a healthy-weight dog, 61 percent reported exercising regularly themselves, and 77 percent said they give their dog exercise more than three times per week.

According to Grace Long, DVM, MS, MBA, "Exercising with our pets not only burns calories, but also helps promote the owner-pet bond."

When establishing a new exercise regimen with the dog, owners should start slow and remember to first check with their veterinarian.