



THE PAWPRINT

Spring Training

Most of us have noticed that our dogs have started looking a little plumper with the cold weather coming to an end. And most of us can relate! It's not unusual for all of us to put on a little "winter weight"—humans and pets alike. But relatively speaking, a few extra pounds for us is a lot less dangerous than a few extra for your 20-pound Fido. With an average of 12 short years of life, dogs need every health advantage they can get. Research shows that trim pets live about 15% longer, or an average of two additional years, than overweight pets. That's two less years of playing ball, getting belly rubs, and giving slobbery kisses! Keeping your dog at a healthy weight will decrease his risk of developing cardiac conditions, cancer, diabetes, osteoarthritis, and other painful hip and joint ailments. It will also increase his energy and decrease behavioral problems. Remember: a well-exercised dog is a well-behaved dog!

So how do you know if your dog is in need of a doggie weight loss plan? Simply by taking a good look at him. A pet's healthy weight is measured not in pounds but in body condition. Try using these three clues:

1. Feel his ribs. You should be able to feel them easily with your fingers but not see them (too thin). If you have to push through blubber to find his ribs, he probably weighs too much.
2. Look at your dog from the side. His abdomen should be "tucked" up behind his ribs, like a wasp.
3. Get a visual from above. You should be able to see an indentation between the ribs and the hips, like an hourglass. This is an area that should curve in not out.

In addition to these physical signs of obesity, you can identify it in your pet's movement and stamina. If your dog is easily winded, has trouble climbing stairs, or has difficulty making the transition from lying down to standing, it may be time to put him on the scale.

So what's the next step? As with humans, the plan is simple: increase activity and decrease calories. Start by cutting out all the Snausages, Beggin' Strips, and table scraps, and replace them with baby carrots, apple slices, ice cubes (try making them with low-sodium broth!), or plain air-popped popcorn. If your pet is dangerously overweight, it may be time to change his food to a low-calorie prescription diet such as Purina OM, Hill's R/D, or Iams Restricted Calorie. Always consult with your veterinarian when determining if a diet change is needed. You may also want to monitor, and possibly decrease, the amount of food your pet gets at each meal. Use the feeding guide on the back of your food bag to help determine how much kibble to serve up, using the recommended amount for a dog that weighs your dog's ideal weight, not the weight that he's at now.

And finally, get out and exercise! Even if you have a fenced yard, your pooch will appreciate a good walk through the neighborhood or a romp-and-play at the dog park. Go for a hike. Throw a ball or frisbee. Take him swimming. You'll both benefit from the exercise and the time spent together is priceless! Good luck and have fun!

Cottage Grove Office

Monday: 8 a.m.–7 p.m.
 Tuesday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
 Wednesday: 8 a.m.–7 p.m.
 Thursday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
 Friday: 8 a.m.–7 p.m.
 Saturday: 8 a.m.–noon

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Deerfield Office

Monday: 8 a.m.–7 p.m.
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 Wednesday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
 Thursday: closed
 Friday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.
 Saturday: 8 a.m.–noon

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Get the Facts (continued)

Dogs love to be petted on the head.

NOT ALWAYS TRUE Some dogs hate it because they have very sensitive eyes and ears. So, stroke the sides of a dog's neck or along their back—especially if it's an unfamiliar dog. When a dog sees a hand coming at him from overhead, he may see it as a threat.

A cat purrs because it is happy.

NOT ALWAYS TRUE Cats do purr when they are happy but they will sometimes purr when they are in pain. Cats have been known to purr when they are giving birth and they will sometimes purr when they are dying. Purring is more an expression of an emotion than an expression of happiness.

Spaying or neutering my pet will change his/her personality.
NO REAL PROOF OF THIS ONE Cats' personalities do not fully develop until about one year of age and dogs' between one and two years. If your pet's personality changes after spaying at an early age, it would have changed without surgery. Males have sometimes been reported to have a slight decrease in energy, and their desire to roam will often decrease, but personality is not typically affected.

Look for more helpful myth busters in the next newsletter.

Age Is Not a Disease!

This is one of my favorite phrases that I present to my clients all the time. Gratefully, this is true, as we are all aging daily! As we and our pets age, however, we require more care and preventative doctors' appointments than when we were young. Let's start by determining just how old our dogs and cats are. The following is a chart depicting human age equivalents as they apply to both dogs and cats based on their actual age in years and their average adult weight. The reason weight is taken into account for dogs is that GENERALLY speaking, small dogs live longer than big dogs. Cats are usually within a fairly narrow weight range so this does not factor in for them.

	Feline	Canine			
		0-20	21-50	51-120	>120
3 years	28	28	29	31	39
4 years	32	33	34	38	49
5 years	36	38	39	45	59
6 years	40	42	44	52	69
7 years	44	46	49	59	79
8 years	48	50	54	66	89
9 years	52	54	59	73	99
10 years	56	58	64	80	
11 years	60	62	69	87	
12 years	64	66	74	94	
13 years	68	70	79		
14 years	72	74	84		
15 years	76	78	89		
16 years	80	82	94		
17 years	84	86			
18 years	88	90			
19 years	92	94			
20 years	96				

Age Analogy Chart: W. Fortney, R. Goldston

As you can see, a 10-year-old shi tzu may be the equivalent of 58 human years and is considered a senior; whereas a 10-year-old labrador is considered to be a geriatric 80 years old! Just as your doctor has a different list of preventative tests and recommendations for 58-year-olds vs. 80-year-olds, the same holds true in veterinary medicine. The other interesting fact to point out on this chart is that as those same two dogs age just one human year, the 58 year old is now 62 and the 80-year-old is now 87! How many of our grandparents never see a doctor ONCE between the ages of 80 and 87? OK, a few, but not many. Annual exams should become semi-annual exams (twice a year) in all pets that achieve the status of "geriatric."

Just as your doctor runs basic blood work at your annual physicals, we should be doing the same for our pets. Since all of the different organ systems within the same animal will age and deteriorate at different rates, ideally we would start testing them as "adults" so that we can start trending the rate at which their different organ systems are aging. Certainly as they enter "senior" status, blood work should be done routinely at each wellness exam.

At the Deer-Grove Veterinary Clinic, in addition to their regular annual exams for dogs and cats, and the heartworm testing for dogs, we recommend a comprehensive blood panel and a urinalysis once a year as they go through their "senior" years. During their "geriatric" years, we encourage you to consider exams, blood work and a urinalysis every six months.

With this small additional investment in time and expense, we can rest easy knowing we're doing all we can to help our best friends to live as long and comfortably as possible through their golden years.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Laura Knipfer

Socializing Your Puppy (continued)

When meeting children, teach them to pet or hold your puppy the correct way. Always supervise children with puppies. Arrange puppy play dates with another puppy, or adult dogs that you know will play well with yours. You want your puppy to have good, positive experiences. Be careful not to put your puppy in a situation where it will have a bad experience.

Before introducing your puppy to other dogs or taking it to classes, be sure it is up to date on its vaccinations.

Your veterinarian will recommend vaccines at eight, 12, and 16 weeks of age.

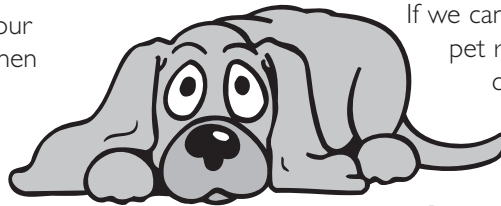
Properly socializing your puppy will lead to a happy, well adjusted dog. The first weeks are a very important time in your puppy's life. The more your puppy sees, hears, and touches, the more its confidence will grow. Go out and have fun!

Lost and Found

Do you know where your pet goes when it runs away? Well, with proper identification you can find out where it has been wondering while you were away. Some animals find themselves a few blocks down the road, while others may be many miles away. We have even had pets lost out of state as far as Tennessee, and with various forms of id tags we were able to find their owners and get them back home.

Identification is very important to keep your animals safe and to return them home when they have lost their way. There are many forms of identification that your animal can have to return them home safely. One of the forms is their rabies tag. Your pet is required to be up-to-date by state law for rabies. Not only is it good to be up-to-date in case they should happen to bite somebody, but it is also a good way to track down your pet using the tag number to identify and return them home.

One other way to track down your animal is by a pet identification tag. You can get these here at the Deer-Grove Veterinary Clinic or you can also get them at PetSmart, and Mounds, or you could even create your own at Wal-mart. No matter which place you choose, it is good to get one for your pet. These tags not only have owners' names on them, but also their address and phone number so that if someone were to find your beloved pet they could call you



and you could make arrangements to come and get them.

One of the best forms of pet identification is micro-chipping. Micro-chipping involves one big needle and a registration form that either the clinic or yourself can fill out and send to the company for the same price. One important factor to remember when your animal is micro-chipped is to keep up with the company and veterinary clinic on any changes in your address or phone number.

If we can't track you down, then we can't get your pet returned to you. If you plan on micro-chipping and your animal has not been spayed or neutered yet, or will be undergoing any kind of anesthesia it is better to have it done at that time.

Because it is a big needle it will be easier on your animal to have it done while undergoing an anesthetic procedure. We can do it while they are awake but it may be uncomfortable for your pet.

Pet identification is important to keep on your pet's collar. Cat collars are another item I wanted to touch on. If you have a cat and they sometimes go outside and have a collar, it is better for them to have a break-away collar. Because cats are natural born climbers, if they should happen to get caught on something with a regular collar on, a serious injury or even death could occur. So, just a friendly reminder for all you cat lovers out there. Have a safe and happy summer!

Pet Medical Records Consent

Did you know that the state of Wisconsin has laws that protect your pet's medical records? Due to this law, we have asked that clients complete a new client information sheet which includes a medical records release statement that allows us to release your pet's medical records to other veterinary clinics, boarding facilities, groomers and rescue/humane organizations. The law states that without your **written** consent, we are not able to do this.

This law also means that unless you submit written permission, we are unable to treat your pet unless you are present and have signed the appropriate forms.

This is most important if you are going on vacation and have someone else taking care of your pet. Please be sure to give us written permission before you depart or add your pet sitter's name to your client information sheet so that your pet's medical needs can be handled in a timely manner. This also applies to routine appointments, for which you may need to have someone else bring in your pet. Be sure that this person has your written permission or your appointment may need to be rescheduled.

Thyroid Diseases

The thyroid gland can cause two very common diseases in dogs and cats. The diseases are almost like mirror opposites of each other with hyperthyroidism being almost exclusively a feline disease, and hypothyroidism being mainly a canine disease. The symptoms and effects of these diseases can be quite extreme, but thankfully they are easily treated with the appropriate medication.

Hyperthyroidism:

This is a disorder that results from excessive production and secretion of thyroid hormones. Cats actually develop tumors on their thyroid glands that produce these hormones. Ninety-five percent of the time these tumors are not malignant, but the effects of higher levels of thyroid hormones on the cat are obvious. Hyperthyroid cats have ravenous appetites but lose lots of weight due to the increased metabolism caused by the high levels of thyroid hormones. (It sounds like the dream diet...eat ravenously but still lose weight!) Sometimes cats will vomit or have diarrhea. Also, they may seem restless, act hyper, or vocalize more.

A simple blood test to check thyroid levels is all that is needed to see if a cat is hyperthyroid. If the levels come back too high, options for treatment include controlling the disease through medication for the rest of the cat's life, or curing the disease with radioactive iodine treatment at the University of Wisconsin Vet School. Since most hyperthyroid cats are older (usually eight years of age or older), most of our clients choose to treat with medication since it is cheaper initially than the treatment at the vet school. The meds are usually given twice daily, and they can come in pill, liquid, or an ear gel form that is applied to the inner ear. Blood testing is done periodically to check the

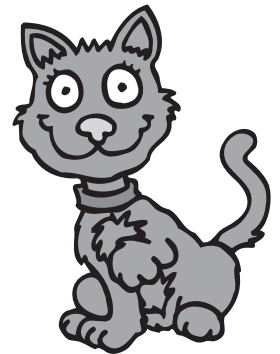
thyroid levels. Once the thyroid levels are normal again, the cat's appetite and weight return to normal, along with its personality and activity level.

Hypothyroidism:

This is a disorder that results from inadequate production and secretion of thyroid hormones, and is mainly a dog disease. Certain breeds, like golden retrievers, are more prone to this disease. Signs can be subtle but include mental dullness, lethargy, areas of hair loss, infertility, and obesity. When a dog is hypothyroid, their metabolism is too low, and thus the above side effects are noted. Many dogs are obese and therefore lethargic, so this can be a tricky diagnosis based on signs alone.

Again, a simple blood test to check thyroid levels is all that is needed to see if a dog is hypothyroid. If the levels come back too low, a pill given once to twice daily of thyroid supplement is needed. This medication is given lifelong, and often will reverse the above signs and allow the dog to lose weight easier.

If you are worried that your pet may have either one of these diseases, feel free to make an appointment and talk with a doctor today. They are very commonly diagnosed, but with appropriate medication, are easy and very rewarding to treat.



How Much Do You Know About Heartworm Disease?

Heartworms have been found in more than 30 species of animals but dogs are considered to be their natural host and reservoir. According to the American Heartworm Society, as many as 27 million dogs in the United States are unprotected against heartworm disease.

Clinical signs of heartworm disease are due to the presence of adult worms in the pulmonary artery. The worms and the changes they cause in the lining of the artery restrict blood flow from the heart to the lungs. Clinical signs depend on the number of worms present, the duration of the infection, and the activity level of the dog. Up to 250 worms can be present in an advanced infection.

The life cycle of the heartworm

A dog gets infected with heartworms after being bitten by a mosquito carrying infective heartworm larvae. For the next two to three months the larvae remain in the subcutaneous tissues of the dog, this is where they molt twice to reach juvenile adult stage. At this time the juvenile (infertile) adults migrate to the heart, where they mature and mate. If the heartworms that are present are all the same sex, then the life cycle stops but the dog is still infected with heartworms. Adult heartworms can live three to five years in dogs. Once the adults mate, microfilariae are released into the bloodstream where they await to be ingested by a mosquito. Microfilariae (baby worms) can survive in the dog's bloodstream for up to two and a half years. Heartworm disease depends on the mosquito to continue its life cycle.

Continued on page 6.

