

Elburn Animal Hospital Newsletter

June, 2009

Welcome

People in the United States are tending toward obesity, but so are our pets! Just like humans, pets can suffer from a wide array of disorders due to being overweight or obese. This month we focus on the condition of obesity, how to prevent this from happening, and tips to help slim down. Any questions can be addressed to a member of our staff at (630) 365-9599, or you can contact us via email at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net.

Safety First

June marks the beginning of summer—an exciting time for families, friends, and pets. The following tips can help keep your pet safe during this exciting season.

- Keep your pet confined inside the house, in a fenced back yard, or on a leash. This reduces the risk of your pet getting into things like garbage and poisons, as well as harmful situations, such as coming in contact with a wild animal or getting hit by a car.
- Keep your pet off the lawn for 24 hours (or as advised by the manufacturer) after using rodenticides, insecticides, herbicides (weed killers), fertilizers or any other lawn treatment. These poisons can cause chemical burns on the skin, or more serious injury if they are ingested. Some of these chemicals are fatal if swallowed. If your pet comes in contact with any of these chemicals, wash the pet with plain water then call your veterinarian for further instructions. If your pet eats any of these products, call the ASPCA Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435 (there is a fee involved). Then call your veterinarian. Time is of the essence in cases of poison ingestion.



quickly causes heat stress. If you notice your pet



panting excessively, looking dazed, wobbling or acting unsure when walking, or if he has a deep red or purple-colored tongue, he may be suffering from heat stress. Cool him down with ice cubes to lick, a cool (not cold) bath, and then call your vet. Do not offer large amounts of water as this can cause complications.

- Do not EVER leave your pet in a car. During the summer, many people like to bring their pets with them for outdoor activities. If you decide you need to stop at the store, take your pet home first. The inside of a car can reach temperatures of 120°F in minutes, even on a nice day.



Rolling down the windows doesn't do much good, either. Besides that, dogs and cats are routinely stolen from cars—several were taken in this area just last summer. Protect your pet and keep him with you or safe at home. If you see a pet in a car while you are out, notify the store manager immediately, or call animal control at (630) 232-3555.

- Never leave your pet unattended while in the water. Pets don't always know their limits when they are enjoying a swim in a lake or a pool, and can get tired suddenly. Drowning accidents are rare, but they are so easy to prevent.
- Be sure to use a flea and tick preventive through the summer months. Pets that travel are especially at risk of infestation, and may be exposed to several different types of parasites during a trip. Prevention is always easier and more cost-effective than treatment.

June: Obesity and Exercise

"He's not fat, he's just big." We hear this statement a lot, but chances are, if you're saying it, your pet is overweight. Obesity is the most common nutrition-related disease in companion animals. It is a form of malnutrition and has been linked to many medical conditions. Some of these include arthritis, bladder infection, diabetes, heart disease, skin disease, reproductive problems, respiratory insufficiency, and an increased risk of cancer.

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Even though your pet may look healthy, extra weight puts stress on bones and internal organs, reducing their capability to function correctly. Keeping extra weight off your pet is proven to help him live a longer, happier life. Although managing your pet's weight can seem like a tough chore, it doesn't have to be if you incorporate some simple techniques into your daily routine. Read on for ideas on how to decrease your pet's weight safely and without much hassle.

- **Physical exam:** Before beginning a weight loss program, your pet should be evaluated by a veterinarian to determine the amount of weight that needs to be lost and the level of activity your pet can tolerate.



- **Reduce portion size:** Any food can be a low-calorie food if the portion is reduced. After discussing your pet's ideal weight, look at the feeding guidelines found on the bag of food you are using. Feed for a pet that weighs 10-20% less than the ideal weight you are trying to reach. For example, if your dog's ideal weight is 50 pounds, feed according to the guidelines given for a 40 to 45 pound dog. If your cat's ideal weight is 7 pounds, feed according to the guidelines given for a 6 pound cat. When your pet reaches the ideal weight, offer the amount of food recommended for that weight in order to stabilize your pet's caloric intake.



- **Reduce calories from treats:** Many pet owners give treats more often than they realize, or larger treats than are appropriate for the size of the pet. Try raw vegetables as treats for dogs. Baby carrots, bits of broccoli, or green beans work well. Never give onions, corn or raw potatoes, and avoid fruit as treats due to the sugar content. Cats do well using protein-based treats, such as dried fish, or chicken bits cooked

with no butter or salt. Keep in mind that one ounce of cheese is the human equivalent (calorie-wise) of 2 ½ hamburgers for a dog, or 3 ½ for a cat!

- **Increase the number of meals:** Feeding multiple smaller meals throughout the day keeps a pet's metabolism amped up just a little bit. Aim for breakfast, lunch and dinner, with the last meal of the day the smallest.
- **Time the meals:** If you must feed just one meal a day, give it in the morning. This makes use of the pet's natural periods of activity to use as much of the energy provided by the food right away, before it has a chance to be transformed into fat. Also, your pet will burn more calories if he is fed shortly after an activity period (but be sure he is "cooled down" beforehand).
- **Increase exercise:** Aim for a minimum of 20 minutes of cardio-type exercise three days a week. For a dog, try a brisk walk or throwing a ball in a fenced area. Cats often respond to a feather wand or a toy tied to a string, but you must supervise the playtime and ensure the toys are not chewed on or eaten. Another trick to increase activity (especially for cats) is to put a food dish on each level of the house, or in different rooms. Cats that are particularly motivated by food will wander up and down the stairs to find the bowl with food.



All of the above tips can also be used to *prevent* your pet from becoming overweight in the first place. Make sure you follow the directions on the pet food and do not feed more than what is recommended. If your pet starts getting plump on the recommended amount, cut back a little until your pet no longer gains weight. Animals, like people, have individual metabolic rates and what works for some will not necessarily work for all pets.

Several studies indicate that leaner pets have a longer life span than overweight pets. The average in one study was two years longer. By keeping your pet's weight within normal range, you not only avoid many health issues, but your pet will have more energy and feel happier, too.

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Our July newsletter will include information about alternative medicine, such as acupuncture and chiropractic treatment. We will also continue our weight-loss campaign. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like more information, visit our website at www.elburnanimalhospital.com, or give us a call at (630) 365-9599. If you would like to opt out of receiving our newsletter, please send an email to us at 3lburn@sbcglobal.net.

Keep thinking about your pet's costume for our **October Open House!** We are hosting another open house at our office, on Saturday, October 24th. Last year we had prizes for best costume, best family theme costumes, and a look-alike contest.

May/June Special: Join us in reducing obesity! Seventy-five percent of pets are overweight. During these months, we are signing up patients to complete a weight-loss drive. Bring your pet in for a wellness exam and sign up for the weight-loss drive. Dr. Cechner will discuss how much weight your pet should lose within a 3-month period, and guide you in how to reach that goal. We will reweigh each pet once every month to ensure he/she is on the right track to reaching the goal. At the 3rd monthly weigh-in, if your pet has reached or surpassed the weight-loss goal, you will receive a \$42 credit on your account. Those pets that don't quite make their goal, but have lost at least 50% of the target weight loss, will receive a \$21 credit, and those who have actively participated with monthly weigh-ins, but haven't seen any appreciable results, will receive a \$10 credit. Plus, you'll have a healthier, happier pet!

Upcoming Events: We still have several more spots open for our **charity dog wash** to benefit Elburn Woods, our local wildlife rehabilitation center. We are offering discounted bathing, nail trims, routine ear cleaning, and anal gland expression. The date is Saturday, June 13th, so reserve your space now. You can even schedule a spot via email!