Dog Obesity

Some studies have shown that 1 in 3 dogs seen by veterinarians today are obese. This is a very real problem, especially when we consider that obesity can have grave consequences including tracheal collapse, hypothyroidism, diabetes, osteoarthritis, kidney disease, cancer, an increased anesthetic risk, and a reduced life span.

Certain factors may make your dog more prone to obesity. Specific breeds—such as Cairn Terriers, West Highland Terriers, Scottish Terriers, Shetland Sheepdogs, Basset Hounds, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Daschunds, Beagles, Cocker Spaniels, Pugs, and Labrador Retrievers—have a higher chance of becoming obese. Older dogs, too, often become obese because their owners do not adjust their caloric intake to reflect the older dog’s reduced energy needs. The number of meals, snacks, and table scraps a dog receives throughout the day generally correlates to its weight.

Carefully analyzing your dog’s weight on a regular basis is key to keeping him healthy. To judge this with an impartial eye, use these guidelines:

15-25% Body Fat (Low Risk): Ribs easily felt under a thin layer of fat. Abdominal tuck present when viewed from the side. Clear muscle definition when viewed from behind. Tail base bones easily felt under a thin fat cover.

25-35% Body Fat (Moderate Risk): Ribs can be felt but under moderate fat cover. Slight abdominal tuck when viewed from the side. Round appearance when viewed from behind. Tail base bones can be felt but under a moderate fat cover.

35-45% Body Fat (High Risk): Ribs very difficult to feel; thick fat cover. Flat/bulging abdomen (no abdominal tuck). Rounded appearance when viewed from behind. Tail base bones very difficult to feel under a thick fat cover and may have fat dimple.

45-55% Body Fat (Serious Risk): Ribs extremely difficult to feel with very thick fat cover. Abdominal bulge when viewed from the side. Square shape to hind quarters when viewed from behind. Tail base bones extremely difficult to feel due to a thick fat cover; fat dimple/fold present.

Are you concerned your dog may be obese? Make an appointment with your veterinarian to discuss a fitness and nutrition plan that is right for you pet.

- Emily Corrie, Deep Creek Vet