
**The Growing Problem of Obesity in Dogs and Cats**

**ABSTRACT**

Obesity is defined as an accumulation of excessive amounts of adipose tissue in the body, and is the most common nutritional disorder in companion animals. Obesity is usually the result of either excessive dietary intake or inadequate energy utilization, which causes a state of positive energy balance. Numerous factors may predispose an individual to obesity including genetics, the amount of physical activity, and the energy content of the diet. The main medical concern of obesity relates to the many disease associations that accompany the adiposity. Numerous studies demonstrated that obesity can have detrimental effects on the health and longevity of dogs and cats. The problems to which obese companion animals may be predisposed include orthopedic disease, diabetes mellitus, abnormalities in circulating lipid profiles, cardiorespiratory disease, urinary disorders, reproductive disorders, neoplasia (mammary tumors, transitional cell carcinoma), dermatological diseases, and anesthetic complications. The main therapeutic options for obesity in companion animals include dietary management and increasing physical activity. Although no pharmaceutical compounds are yet licensed for weight loss in dogs and cats, it is envisaged that such agents will be available in the future. Dietary therapy forms the cornerstone of weight management in dogs and cats, but increasing exercise and behavioral management form useful adjuncts. There is a need to increase the awareness of companion animal obesity as a serious medical concern within the veterinary profession.