

Pet Obesity

By Dr. Hannah Bigelow, DVM

The time has come to talk about the elephant in the room - obesity. According to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP), in 2018, 60% of cats and 56% of dogs were overweight or obese, which equates to 56 million cats and 50 million dogs! Just like in humans, obesity can predispose animals to significant health issues. Overweight animals are more likely to suffer from arthritis, diabetes, heart and renal disease, high blood pressure, and even certain types of cancer...the list goes on and on. Overweight animals have shorter lifespans with more medical issues. In 2016, 1.4 million insurance claims were made for obesity related health issues resulting in over \$62 million in claim payouts. These claims were a 24% increase from just four years prior. Obesity is on the rise in our nation. 90% of owners do not even realize their pets are overweight.

When you visit us at the Animal Care Center, our veterinarians can assign your pet a body condition score, which helps us decide if weight loss is needed. The hallmark of weight loss plans are calorie reduction and increased exercise. Weight loss is a marathon, not a sprint! Dogs should lose approximately 1-5 percent of their body weight per month. Cats should aim to lose 0.5 pounds per month. Dogs should exercise 30 minutes per day and cats should have 5 minutes of intense periods of play three times daily. Inability to lose weight appropriately could be explained by a medical reason and bloodwork or other diagnostics may be warranted. Achieving ideal body condition for your pet is a team effort. Talk to your vet about how you can help your pet live a longer, fuller life.

