

Exercise: You and Your Dog

“Obesity . . . has been called the most common nutritional disease of dogs in western countries.” According to a Veterinary Journal, in 2010 it was estimated that 1/3 of the dog population presented to veterinary hospitals were obese.

Some clients do not even realize their dogs are overweight. It is up to veterinarians to inform clients about the risks of obesity, healthy diets, and exercise. I usually joke with clients about their pet’s weight and say “we still have some excess weight from the holidays we need to take off” and try to approach the delicate subject with a gentle and light hearted approach. However, I also try to stress the importance of a healthy weight for the following reasons:

Obesity risks:

Arthritis

Respiratory distress

Diabetes Mellitus

Hypertension (elevated blood pressure)

Dystocia (difficulty giving birth)

Decreased heat tolerance

Some forms of cancer

Increased risk of anesthetic and surgical complications

If there are no underlying medical reasons for a dog’s obesity problem it is typically the owner that needs to be reeducated and diligent about their pet’s weight.

A healthy diet and exercise is the key to weight loss and obesity prevention. Not only will the exercise be good for your pet, but good for the owners as well. “New research shows that people who own dogs are about 34% more likely to get the recommended minimum amount of exercise each week.”

If you are concerned about your pet’s weight, or need help reducing your pet’s weight, talk to your veterinarian. You will be giving your pet a better quality life and a longer life.

