Small Animal Newsletter Winter 2022

CVC CLINIC NEWS

Welcome to the Winter edition of the CVC Small Animal Newsletter! We hope you are staying warm and dry!

In this edition will focus on how we recognise when our pet might be over weight and what we can do to help them on their weight loss journey. We will also look at the benefits of dental x-rays to help make accurate assessment and diagnosis of your pet's oral health.

Camperdown Veterinary Centre

1 Leura Street , Camperdown

Ph: (03) 5593 1077

Hours:

- 8:00am – 5:30pm (Monday – Friday)
- 9.00am – 12:00pm (Saturday)

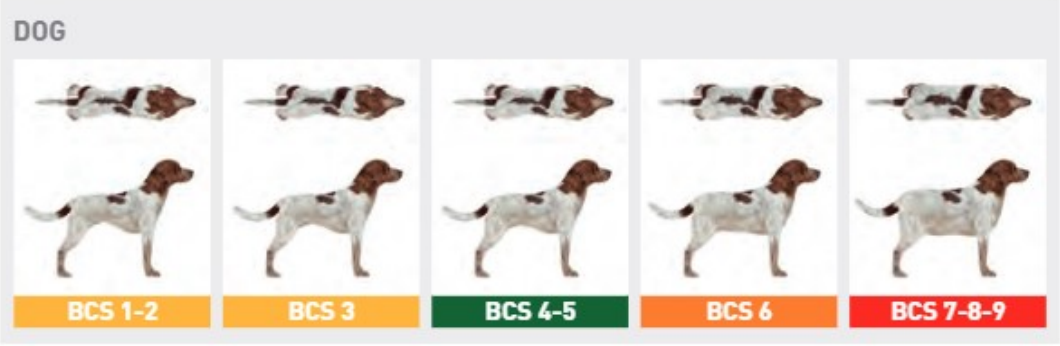
Medication and food collections only on Saturday mornings

PREVENTING OSTEOARTHRITIS—WEIGHT LOSS!

Do you find it hard to say "no" to those pleading eyes and just have to slip a little treat here and there? Last newsletter explored the ins and outs of osteoarthritis. You may remember that one of the best preventatives AND treatments is weight loss and so considering Winter is when all of us tend to pack on a few extra kilos we thought we might explore what we can do to help our pets lose weight.

Last newsletter we discussed osteoarthritis in pets and how wear and tear of joints causes pain and lameness. Often associated with older pets, the damage to the joints can start to occur much earlier in life—particularly in over weight cats and dogs. The best treatment for osteoarthritis is prevention—and prevention looks like weight loss. Being a healthy weight also helps prevent metabolic diseases like Diabetes, particularly in cats so it's vital for a long and happy life.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY PET IS OVERWEIGHT?



We are often asked by pet parents "what weight should my pet be?", but it's hard to give an exact number because different breeds and even different sexes will have different weight ranges. Instead, we use a body condition score to tell if a pet is a healthy weight or not. This helps us tell if they are underweight too! Here is a visual guide of body condition scoring in dogs — what number would you give your pet? This is based on palpating your pet's ribs and looking for a "waist". The ideal pet has ribs that are easily felt but not seen and an obvious waist. If you can't feel your pet's ribs well enough to count them they are overweight!

WHAT CAN I DO IF MY PET IS OVERWEIGHT?

RULE OUT DISEASE!

If you have already tried weight loss but haven't been successful then your vet can rule out metabolic diseases that could be contributing to the problem. Diseases like Hypothyroid disease, Cushing's disease, Diabetes and even some medications can all contribute to weight gain. Your vet can perform an examination and blood tests before you start your diet program. With our in house laboratory we can have results on the same day!

Like humans, it is always a good idea to start any weight loss program under the advice of a professional. So, if you think you pet is overweight please call 03 5593 1077 and book an appointment with our vets to discuss the safest way to lose weight.

DIET

The first step to weight loss is making sure your feeding the right *amount* of food. Most pet foods have a feeding guide on the packet which helps you determine the quantity to feed. It's very easy to overestimate when we use scoops or cups so to increase your chances of success we recommend weighing the food out each day. Most good quality dry foods equate to about 100g per 10kg of bodyweight BUT this varies with brand and level of exercise your pet does. Growing, working or pregnant/lactating pets will need more food than older, inactive and indoor pets.

The next step is to make sure you are feeding the right *type* of food. The best option is a prescription diet formulated for overweight or obese pets. We stock Royal Canin Satiety which is designed to help your pet feel "full" whilst having a reduced caloric intake. When the ideal weight has been reached, you may be able to use a low fat readily available diet. Our vets and nurses can discuss with you which is the right diet for your pet and help you formulate how much to feed per day. Home made diets are harder to formulate as they are not standardised.

TREATS

This is where we often come undone. What seems so innocuous is in fact like offering a high calorie food like a donut to us. This chart may convince you that that little bit of sausage isn't actually such a great idea after all! The best treat option is to take part of your pet's daily food allowance and keep this aside to use as treats.

It's easy to overfeed a...

DOG

FOOD	QUANTITY	ENERGY INTAKE (kcal)	DAILY ENERGY INTAKE EXCESS*	EQUIVALENT IN DOUGHNUTS FOR HUMANS**
Rawhide bone	190 g	699 kcal	67 %	
Dried pig ear	50 g	216 kcal	21 %	
Cheddar cheese	60 g	242 kcal	23 %	
Dried Meat	65 g	216 kcal	21 %	
Tuna in oil	178 g	331 kcal	32 %	
Muffin	110 g	330 kcal	32 %	
Ham	100 g	164 kcal	16 %	
Sausage	56 g	130 kcal	13 %	

*Over and above the normal daily energy intake for a 20 Kg dog.
**Equivalent number of 200 Kcal doughnuts for a person on a 2,000 Kcal diet.

CAT

FOOD	QUANTITY	ENERGY INTAKE (kcal)	DAILY ENERGY INTAKE EXCESS†	EQUIVALENT IN DOUGHNUTS FOR HUMANS††
Cream cheese	2 tea-spoons	54 kcal	26 %	
Yoghurt	2 tea-spoons	41 kcal	20 %	
Milk	100 ml	58 kcal	28 %	
Crème fraiche	25 g	96 kcal	46 %	
Tuna in can	25 g	28 kcal	13 %	
Liver paté	43 g	154 kcal	74 %	
Liver	25 g	30 kcal	14 %	
Ham rind	30 g	255 kcal	123 %	

†Over and above the normal daily energy intake for a 4 Kg cat.
††Equivalent number of 200 Kcal doughnuts for a person on a 2,000 Kcal diet.

EXERCISE

Exercise is important but if you pets is very obese you may need to build up slowly. Slowly increasing lead walks is a great place to start. Multiple short walks daily may be more readily tolerated than a big long run once a week. Arthritic pets will enjoy swimming as it relieves the load on their joints. Avoid high intensity games like ball chasing if your pet is stiff and sore.

Even cats can be encouraged to exercise with toys as simple as a scrunched up paper ball or laser pointer. They need as little as 10 minutes a day.

As your pet loses weight you may notice they can walk for longer and may seem to have more energy. If your pet is very overweight or a brachycephalic (squashed face) breed it is important to avoid them overheating so choose cooler parts of the day for your daily exercise.

FINALLY, KEEP IT SLOW AND STEADY

Aim for 1-2% bodyweight loss per week. This means it can take 6-12 months to reach a healthy weight—be patient!

WHAT IF YOUR DOG SIMPLY DOESNT SEEM TO LOSE WEIGHT DESPITE DIETING?

HYPOTHYROIDISM— A HORMONAL REASON BEHIND WEIGHT GAIN

What Is Hypothyroidism?

Hypothyroidism results from decreased thyroid hormone production by the thyroid glands. Thyroid hormones are essential for maintaining our overall metabolism and so if are underactive then our pets are predisposed to a slower metabolic rate and hence weight gain!

It is seen most commonly in middle-aged to older large breed dog such as Golden Retrievers. Affected dogs become easily fatigued, sleep for longer periods of time, are often dull in their attitude and may seek a warm area in cold weather. The dog's skin becomes thickened in hypothyroidism and the hair coat becomes dry and loses sheen, sometimes the hair color dulls. There is often "seborrhea" which presents as a greasy, malodorous coat that is prone to infection. Often the hair may become very sparse, with extensive bald patches over the back and flanks and the skin itself becomes quite dark/. Clipped hair may not regrow and often that's the first clue we have, a patient who had surgery but at the annual vaccination we notice the clipped hair still hasn't grown back! Other body systems affected include the neruromuscular system and some dogs will show signs of limb lameness or weakness or even facial paralysis or cough.

Diagnosing Hypothyroidism

Whilst this disease is relatively common, it is at risk of over diagnosis if the test results are not carefully interpreted. Luckily, we have the ability to perform an initial screening blood test right here in clinic, giving you results in less than 30 minutes! If this test suggests that hypothyroid disease is a possible cause of your pets weight gain or skin changes then your vet will order a subsequent test to be sent to an external lab to confirm the findings.

Treatment

Supplementing thyroid hormone in your pet is pretty straight-forward with daily medication however it is important to monitor thyroid hormone closely in the first year ensure the dose is effective and appropriate as their metabolic rate changes. The patient's general sense of well being will improve within a few weeks, but improvement in skin condition and weight loss may take 2–3 months. If the pet is responding well then they thyroid hormone can be added to a total annual health plan to monitor for any resistance to treatment and any dose adjustments needed.

DENTAL X-RAYS

There's a saying in vet medicine that "more mistakes are made from not looking than from not knowing" and no more can this be true than when it comes to animal dentistry!

85% of pets over the age of 3 have periodontal disease, but many go untreated. At Camperdown Vet Centre we are committed to providing best practice care for our valued patients and have invested in up to date dentistry equipment so we can offer comprehensive oral care to these pets. This includes offering dental x-rays in practice. Dental x-rays form an essential part of a comprehensive dental examination. Why is this so? Well, you can't see what you don't look for!

When we look at your pet's mouth in the consultation room, we are limited to only seeing dental disease that lies on the crown of the teeth and the gum. But it's what lies below the gum that is the most important. To make an accurate assessment and diagnosis of your pet's oral health we need to put together a complete diagnostic picture that includes the visual examination of the teeth and gums, dental probing around the teeth to look for pockets and dental x-rays to assess the integrity of the boney structures around the teeth. Just like when we go to the dentist! The only difference is that to do this thoroughly in pets we need a general anaesthetic!

Because 75% of the tooth lies below the gum line, without dental x-rays we may miss significant changes such as bone loss, tooth resorption, retained roots, abcesses, jaw fractures and even tumours. If ignored these can all cause ongoing pain for your pet.

Dental x-rays are useful to confirm that teeth do in fact need extraction and sometimes this can mean we *don't* take a tooth out! By using dental x-rays we can make an accurate treatment plan for your pet and be prepared for surprises like extra roots, hooked roots and retained roots. Knowing this in advance helps us plan an atraumatic approach, reducing post-operative pain and complications for your pet.

CLINICAL SIGNS OF DENTAL DISEASE:

Halitosis (bad breath)

Discoloured teeth

Loose teeth

Gingivitis—red , inflamed gums

Changed behaviour—withdrawn or snappy

Rarely reluctance to eat

Changes in face shape—swellings, altered jaw shape, protruding teeth or tongue

Dental radiographs (x-rays) provide a wealth of information beyond what we can see when we simply lift the lip in consult. Unfortunately, it can be hard to identify oral pain in your pet's mouth as they will still eat and drink despite having loose and infected teeth. Some pets may have become withdrawn or resent being touched around their head. After dental treatment many owners tell us "They are like a puppy again!".

AUGUST IS PET DENTAL MONTH!

Early detection of periodontal disease can avoid diseased teeth causing pain in your pet and the associated bacterial infection affecting other organs such as the heart, liver and kidneys. If you are interested in seeing what lurks beneath your pet's gumline, book in for a dental check up with our vets. As an added incentive, for the month of August (dental month) we will offer ***free*** dental x-rays with all dental procedures booked.