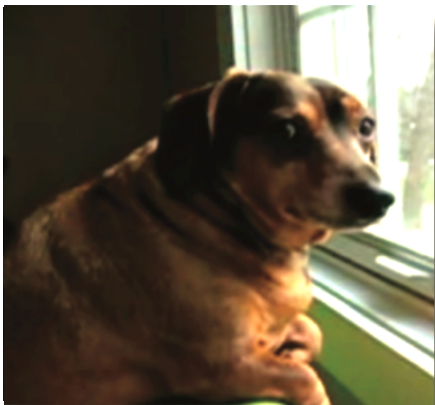


Overweight?

Many owners have difficulty in seeing obesity in their own dog

BY P. MILNER



Most dogs are overfed and under exercised.

An overweight dog moves slower, gets tired out more quickly, is more prone to other health problems and suffers reduced immunity. Obesity increases the load on various systems making fat dogs more prone to IVDD, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, heat stress, diabetes and liver disease.

Surgery takes longer to work through layers of fat, and obesity complicates drug therapy, anesthesia, and recovery from disc injury. Before starting any weight loss plan it is advisable to first see your veterinarian, in case your dog is overweight because of a medical condition. In this case it may be dangerous for you to attempt weight loss without veterinary supervision.

With age, metabolism slows. Look for a middle-age spread after age 5. Spayed and castrated dogs tend to gain more weight than non-neutered dogs. Some dogs are just born with “fat genes” and need monitoring to stay slim.

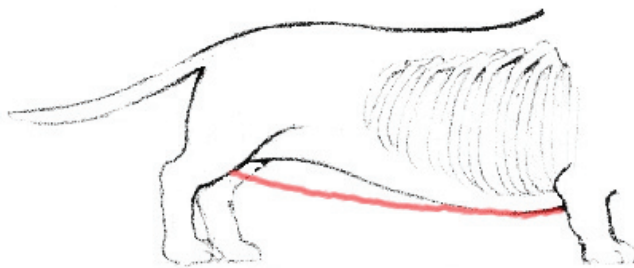
The food The first place to start is with the food itself. Feeding a poor quality grocery store brand food is never a good idea. It is more expensive due to more quantity needed to fulfill nutritional requirements. The body will also expel more waste matter. Look for a dog food that has two animal proteins listed in the first 3 ingredients. Look for specific named meats such as chicken, chicken meal, turkey, eggs. Avoid byproducts, generic meats such as meat meal, poultry meal. Avoid any food that contains corn as the first ingredient (ground or any other form).

Use a measuring cup to give your dog precisely the right amount of food every time. The amount suggested on the bag is merely a guideline. Each dog’s metabolism and activity level is different.

- Minis: 7–12 lbs ¾ cup or less each day
- Tweenies 13–16 lbs 1 cup of food a day or less
- Standard-sized: 17+ lbs 1 cup of food a day or less
- Large standards: 30+ lbs. up to two cups of food a day if active.

Weight check Weigh your dog at least monthly to determine if the amount fed is appropriate. You will also be observing your dog’s appearance to judge when he is at an ideal weight. It takes 3-4 months to safely drop excess weight by cutting food intake slowly and adding exercise.

A handy tip for weighing your dog on a bathroom scale is to weigh yourself while you hold the dog and then weigh yourself without the dog and subtract the difference.



Visual progress

- Too heavy: Dog has no waist indentation when viewed from above (photo at left.) Belly is rounded when viewed from the side in above illus. (red line).

- Ideal: you can feel and somewhat see the outline of the ribs. Dog has a waist indentation when viewed from above. Belly is tucked up when viewed from the side

Tips for a begging or whining dog

1. Food begging behavior is interpreted as hunger sensation by owners. Many dogs will beg right after eating. Begging behavior is positively reinforced by giving a treat in response to the unwanted behavior. Extinguish the behavior by never giving in when a dog begs.
2. Play a game
3. Teach him a new trick
4. Take your dog’s mind off his growling tummy and get outside for a walk. Increase your dog’s daily walks by just a few minutes each day until he is getting 10 additional minutes of exercise a day. Do not depend on the dog to exercise himself in the back yard; like most people, dogs will not exercise sufficiently without some incentive to do so.
5. Practice an obedience command
6. Brush his coat and give a massage
7. Crate with a favorite toy
8. Everyone in your home needs to know what the new rules are for feeding your dog.