

Weight loss in dogs is without a doubt the most important thing you are going to do for your dog in its lifetime. At the same time as being extremely important it is also extremely easy and I wonder why people don't engage it more. Most dogs over 20 pounds are going to be put to sleep because they cannot get around anymore and have to be carried outside to go to the bathroom or it hurts the owners heart to watch them try to walk. This is unavoidable. However it can be substantially delayed by as many as 3 to 4 years. Maintaining a low bodyweight for the life of the dog is a way of life, but can also be accomplished later in life as needed. When I see a fat dog, especially a really fat dog, I wonder how that person can say that they truly love their pets. And I know they do, I'm *sure* they do. But they are not putting it together that they are drastically shortening the pet's life and continue contributing to a deteriorated quality of life during the latter years.

There are **five** avenues to weight loss I will cover the most briefly and effectively as possible.

One of the methods of weight loss involves ¹**exercise** which for the most part is common sense. Weight loss can be accomplished *without* exercise because not every dog can exercise but every dog *can* eat less of the right things.

Second method of weight loss is to capitalize on a dogs own natural metabolism ²**by feeding an ultra low carbohydrate diet**. That is to say, going with less than 20% carbohydrate. Calculating the carbohydrates and the dogs diet can be done by taking 100%, and subtracting the percentages of fat, protein, moisture, fiber, and ash if listed. The remaining number is the percentage of carbohydrates in the diet. Animals lose weight naturally and their appetite is curbed by feeding diets that are less than 20% carbohydrate. I have a tutorial on low-carbohydrate feeding at: **johnsonvet.com/lowcarb**

The third avenue of weight-loss is ³**simply restricting fat**, thereby restricting *calories* in the diet. Any diet with 7% crude fat or less can be used in a diet of this type fed once or twice a day with no grazing and nothing added. If the pet seems to be starving which they usually do, you may use green beans to put something in their stomach and enhance their satiety while losing weight this way. I am constantly stunned by people who are concerned that *fat dogs will not eat their diet food*. Why are we coaxing overweight animals to eat? It would be like pulling a fat child up to the buffet and coaxing them to get more food.

The fourth avenue of weight loss for animals with orthopedic issues that need rapid resolution, for example when a dog blows a knee and our concern is for the *other* knee which is now bearing all of the weight. They can be ⁴**put on a diet composed of boiled eggs and vegetables with no starch**. The nutrition is one hard-boiled egg for 15 pounds of body weight twice a day, the balance of the nutrition is made up with low-carbohydrate vegetables which are usually found in an Asian stir-fry pack. The main thing is to avoid peas, corn, lima beans, and potatoes you get the idea that we want our calories from the eggs and *not* from starches or carbohydrates and vegetables. The dogs may have unlimited amounts of the vegetables.

The final method of weight loss is for animals that are morbidly obese with heart problems, both knees blown, needing emergency surgery for orthopedics that would break down as soon as it was done because of the dog's weight, dogs that cannot breathe because they are so fat and we see them all the time. This modality of weight loss is simply ⁵**feeding the vegetables mentioned above, and skipping the eggs**. You are still giving the dog something to eat, its stomach need not be empty for the whole process, and there is some nutritional value to getting orange and yellow and green vegetables. This weight-loss is effective and rapid but should not be endeavored for more than one month as animals do require protein but can do without much for weeks. Again this is a last resort radical method of weight loss for animals that are racing against death.

In all of the above scenarios it can be important to supply vitamins because in some cases the vitamins are missing in these diets. There are numerous vitamins available on the market, my office probably has one, and you can also use Flintstone vitamins in the orange box also known as Flintstones Complete, which has 18 mg of iron in it. The dose is 1/2 tablet per 20 pounds per day. I would consider a maximum dose to be two tablets but that dog would have to be about 100 pounds to qualify for that much.

To close this discussion, let me reiterate my confusion at folks to coax their fat dog to eat, and exhibit anxiety that their pet needs to continue to ingest calories while it is dying of, or experiencing a deteriorated quality of life from, doing just that.