

Hepatic Lipidosis in Cats : Obesity in Cats and Why it Matters So Much

If You Love Cats, this is what you should know about obesity in cats, and Hepatic Lipidosis.

First, “Why Should I Care if My Cat is Fat?”

There are primarily two reasons:

1. First, feeding a cat in such a way that causes obesity is ALSO risky from the standpoint of developing PANCREATITIS which despite all the leading-edge press-hungry nouveau “pundits” saying it’s NOT diet related – WELL IT IS.
2. Too much fat in the diet, OR the genetic predisposition to keep the fat in the blood stream too long (persistent lipemia) cause pancreatitis by interfering with the pancreas’ microvasculature, AND providing a constant stimulus for overwork producing lipase. An unnecessary strain.
3. If you want to avoid PANCREATITIS in cats, feed them less, feed them less fat, and keep them a little thinner. You can still see pancreatitis in cats without those factors. Don’t tempt fate with extras!!

Second, significant obesity in cats “sets the stage” for a condition called “Hepatic Lipidosis.”

And here’s how Hepatic Lipidosis works:

In a fat cat suddenly deprived of food: **It’s exaggerated fat mobilization:**

A significantly obese cat is suddenly deprived of food by an unexpected illness that causes an appetite-stopping fever, or a broken jaw, or being trapped in the laundry room for three days. Maybe someone decides to “starve the weight off ‘em” and simply stops feeding for a few days, or until it finally eats “diet food”. (Like you should in a dog but not in a cat).

The cat demands calories. When “the call” goes out for fat-calories, and because the cat is very fat - the response is TORRENTIAL and several gallons of fat are dumped. Which clumps in the liver, turning it yellow with fat, and shutting it down.

Really fat cats are LIKELY to develop this “probably fatal” response when deprived of food.

Why is Hepatic Lipidosis “probably fatal?”

Because the cats are dealing with ketosis and liver failure, their appetite further suffers, compounding their lipidosis. To survive, they HAVE to eat in order to suspend fat mobilization. Further, they have to burn the energy now over-stored in the liver.

Eating is the most important piece of survival, but “Getting them to eat” becomes practically impossible so they often require “tubes” in the face, or mouth, esophagus or right into the stomach. Ain’t nobody got \$21,000 for that. (Estimated cost at Blue Pearl Veterinary after the MRI, CT scan, Auditory Evoked Potentials, cardiac echocardiogram, neurological exam, transtracheal wash, and orthopedic consult .)

In a perfect world the cats would be hospitalized, gastrostomy-tubed and managed on gruel via gastrostomy tube until recovered. Fluids and other support would help with survival and pain medications would be nice. For almost everybody, against very guarded odds, most people would be unable or unwilling to spend like that.

To avoid Hepatic Lipidosis, it’s better to keep a cat at a more conservative weight. They do NOT need to be lean. Or skinny.

They just need to eat less, eat less fat, and be less heavy.

That does the best to avoid a torrential mobilization of excess fat if the cat is unable or unwilling to eat for 48-72+ hours.

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