

## Additional Helpful Sources

Association for Pet Obesity Prevention:  
<http://www.petobesityprevention.com/>

RSPCA: <http://www.rspca.org.uk/allaboutanimals/pets/general/obesity>

PDSA: <http://www.pdsa.org.uk/pet-health-advice/further-information/pet-obesity/>

American Veterinary Medical  
Association: <http://www.avma.org>

Morris Animal Foundation: <http://www.morrisanimalfoundation.org>



The Girl Scout Gold Award is the highest achievement a Girl Scout can earn. It is the Girl Scout equivalent of an Eagle Scout award.

I have been a Girl Scout for eleven years and am in Girl Scout Troop 5238, Mountain Home, AR. I earned my Bronze Award, the highest award for Brownie/Junior Girl Scouts, in 6th grade. This brochure is one of three parts to my Gold Award project (the others being the website and a Pet Health Fair). Dr. Rob Conner is my project advisor.

For More Information on Girl Scouts:

Girl Scouts USA:  
<http://www.girlscouts.org/>

Our Council, Diamonds of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas:  
<http://www.girlscoutsdiamonds.org/>

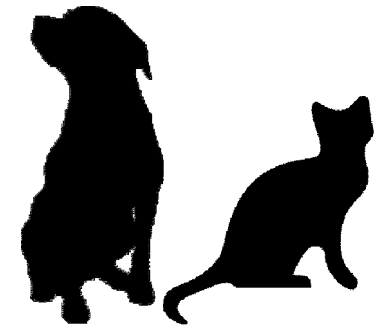
### Special Thanks to:

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By Jessica Eckberg

# Pet Obesity Awareness

## A Girl Scout Gold Award Project

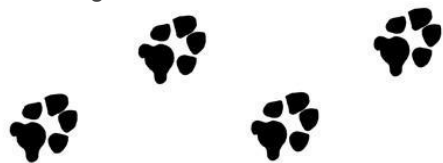


# The Problem With Plump Kitties and Pudgy Pooches

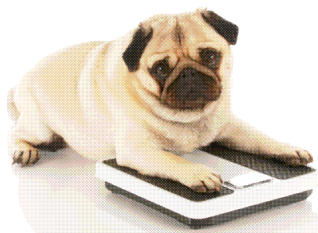
Humans aren't the only ones who have been packing on the pounds in recent years. According to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, an estimated 54%, or 93 million of dogs and cats in the United States are overweight or obese. Cats alone had the highest obesity rates at 21.4%, while dogs were fairing slightly better with 8.6%. In other words, around 6.7 million dogs and 20 million cats are obese.

Being obese means the animal is 20% or more heavier than their ideal body weight, and 5-19% for those that are overweight. When asked by their vets, 90% of dog owners and 54% of cat owners responded that they regularly gave their pets treats. But when their vets tell them their pet is overweight, only about 17% of owners agree.

If your pet seems to be getting a bit chubby, see if you can feel his or her ribs. If not, then your pet may be overweight.



For More Information, see  
[PetObesityAwareness.com](http://PetObesityAwareness.com)



## Risks and Side Effects

Just like us, our pets can develop various health problems from being obese. Here are just a few medical conditions and diseases commonly seen in overweight pets:

- Osteoarthritis
- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- Heart Disease
- Respiratory Disease
- Ligament Injury
- Kidney Disease
- Many Forms of Cancer
- Behavioral Problems

The quality of life for these roly-poly pets is greatly reduced. They don't have nearly the same amount of energy of an animal at its ideal weight.

Those animals with an ideal body weight tend to live 15% longer than those that are overweight. Allowing your pet to become obese can take 2 or 3 years off their life.

## Treatment and Prevention

Here are some ways you can take the extra pounds off of your pet and keep them at a healthy weight:

- **Choose your pet food wisely:** look for those containing more proteins and less by-products and other fillers. Be wary of ambiguous labels.
- **Avoid foods containing fatty ingredients:** this can include corn, corn gluten meal, wheat or wheat gluten meal. You should also pay attention to the amount of non-digestible protein.
- **Give treats sparingly:** they contain more calories than you think.
- **Try healthier treats:** many animals actually like some fruits and veggies, such as carrots, cantaloupe, and apples.
- **Don't give out table scraps.**
- **Make sure your pets stay hydrated.**
- **Exercise is key:** walking or playing with your pet can be good exercise for both of you!
- **Monitor their weight:** if your pet is having trouble losing weight, or is still gaining weight despite your efforts, you should see your vet to check for other medical issues that may be affecting your pet's weight.



There are specialized treadmills made for dogs, but a regular treadmill works too.