Pet Owners Contribute to Canine Obesity

So, the second culprit are absolutely pet owners. That would be you. If you have a pet that’s heavy, you are participating in your pet’s medical condition. Now, what I mean by that is you have to evaluate your food habits. There is no such thing as dogs that are heavy being able to eat an all-you-can-eat buffet.

Even if you’re feeding a light or diet food, you’re going to have to measure with a measuring cup. I don’t want you to use a coffee scoop, I don’t want you to use a slurpee cup, and I don’t want you to use a coffee cup. You need to get a kitchen measuring cup and you need to measure out your dog’s portion and put it in your dog’s bowl.

Does that mean that you’re going to be feeding your dog below its kilocalorie requirement and your dog is going to be hungry? It does. That also means you’re going to have to practice ‘tough love,’ which means your dog is going to be hungry.

You’ve got to feed your dog a calorie deficit, which means you’re going to feed your dogs less calories than what’s required, which is how your dog is going to lose weight. That means you’ve got to measure and do portion control and you’re going to have to watch the number of treats.

Many dog owners don’t factor in that a little bit of pizza crust, cracker or the crust of bread from a sandwich could contribute to calories, especially in small dogs. Let’s just say an 8-lb. Chihuahua has a stomach capacity equivalent to the size of a walnut. It’s a tiny amount of food that’s required to sustain those energy requirements.

We don’t think of it that way so as we share foods with our Chihuahua all day, in addition to giving them portion-control breakfast and dinner, there’s a very good chance that your Chihuahua is consuming calories so treats and people-food are a big culprit of adding calories on top on an already pre-measured food for your particular dog.

So, uneducated food choice is the second reason that pet owners are to blame for overweight issues. Oftentimes, we pick out good foods. I don’t recommend across-the-board diet or light foods. I recommend that you feed your dog a regular maintenance diet, which is moderate fat and higher in protein, but that you make sure that your counting the portions to be able to match up with your dog’s energy expenditure.
The number one issue I see is that people think, ‘okay, this must be a better food because it’s light’ and they end up not really counting calories or reading the back of the bag and the animals end up heavier than what they were on a food that provides less nutritional value.

The third and most obvious reason why owners are to blame for pets’ weight gain is exercise. On average, we come home from work, we’re exhausted, we’re overworked, we’re tired, sometimes it’s cold outside, sometimes it’s dark, and we just don’t feel like exercising your pets.

The number one issue I see at natural pet is people come in and say, ‘I do exercise my dog, we run around the house, and sometimes we play Chuckit! in the backyard.’ Running around the house does not constitute aerobic, heart-thumping, muscle-building, calorie-burning cardiovascular exercise, unfortunately.

For dogs to really burn calories, they have to have their heart rate elevated for 20 minutes minimum consistently, which means you have to put your dog on a leash and you have to move their bodies consistently. It’s not a sniff-whiz-dawdle, you have to move their bodies consistently to have their heart rate elevated to get into a fat-burning mode. And most owners simply don’t do that.

**Veterinarians Can Also Affect Pet’s Obesity**

Absolutely, veterinarians are also to blame when it comes to the weight issue pertaining to the pet obesity crisis in the United States. Veterinarians that tell you that spaying and neutering does not affect your dog’s weight, I’m not going to say they are lying, but the truth is that’s not true.

You have been misinformed by your veterinarian that says, ‘No, spaying and neutering does not change their metabolism.’ Common sense would tell you that when you remove the sex hormone-producing organs of your dog and cat, metabolism will slow down. And it will.

I recently had a Newfoundland that I spayed in November and she came in last week. In two months time, she had put on 22 lbs. That’s over 10 lbs. a month. That’s a rapid weight gain.

Now, the owners comment, ‘but she still looks good,’ and she does. But I said to the owner, if she gains 10 lbs. a month through this next year, she’s going to be clinically obese by the time that she’s 3 and that’s no good. So, veterinarians must be honest and confront the fact that after spaying and neutering, metabolism drops and you have to account for that by decreasing calories in the diet.

Age and metabolism factor in to weight gain so the midlife spread is incredibly common for many dogs. If you are still feeding the exact same portion to your 3-year-old dog that you were
feeding when your dog was one, you’re probably overfeeding your pet. Breeds – beagles, cocker spaniels, golden retrievers, Labradors, terriers, basset hounds, doxies – all are breeds that have the tendency to gain weight over time.

So, if you have a breed that’s predisposed to weight gain, you’ve got to be very cautious about not only counting the calories but popping your dog on a scale on a regular basis to make sure that they’re not inadvertently gaining half a pound here or few ounces there. The weight gain in dogs happen just like with us, it’s slow but consistent so you weighing your pets very regularly is a great way to keep in check with the fact that your dogs are, yes, burning those calories or no, not burning those calories.

Undiagnosed hormone disorders are also reasons that veterinarians have not helpfully assisted you in addressing what weight issues come about in your dogs. Adrenal disease and thyroid disease are rampant in the pet population.

Many veterinarians like me are quite cognizant of the fact that endocrine disorders are the major contributing medical factor to why dogs gain weight. However, if you have a veterinarian that has not yet helped you identify potential metabolic reasons why your dog can’t lose weight, ask your veterinarian to please check for adrenal and thyroid diseases because that could be a major reason why you’re dieting and exercising your dog yet your pet is still not losing weight.

**Risks of Canine Obesity**

So what if your pet’s fat? Some people come to me and say, ‘you know, I know my dog’s 5 or 10 lbs. overweight, she’s a 4-year-old lab but she looks good and feels good.’ And I agree with that, she does look good and feel good.

But dogs can be young and overweight and not have a whole lot of issues but if you don’t get that weight off before they hit midlife, then certainly in their geriatric years, that weight becomes a tremendous metabolic risk, not only the common sense things like premature arthritis, musculoskeletal disorders like disc disease and cervical neck disease, there’s a predisposition to back, ACL or soft tissue ruptures, and ligament and tendon tears. All are certainly increased with the more weight your dog gains.

Heart disease is increased as are respiratory diseases. Weight gain causes snoring, so if you notice that your overweight dog is snoring, and you say, ‘you know that’s easy to deal with,’ but it is a respiratory burden for your dog. Diabetes, skin conditions, as well as compromised immune systems including cancers have all been linked to dog obesity. So, if you’re not entirely convinced at the end of this video that you need to help your dog reach his/her ideal body weight, this list of potential side effects is a good reason to get motivated to do so.
I’m going to conclude this video. And in the second part of this video, we’re going to talk about identifying how you are able to help control pet’s weight and also how would you know if your dog is fat.