

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

The beginning of each new year seems to bring a focus on our weight, especially if we are overweight. My cell phone is loaded with ads for chair yoga, how far to walk to lose so many pounds, the Mediterranean diet...the list goes on. Yes, I would like to lose a little weight but on the other hand I really like treats. The following is an article on the Northwoods Humane Society website for Wellness Wednesday that our Shelter Manager, Alecia Austin will soon post. It applies to people as well as pets.

**Wellness Wednesday: What to Do If Your Pet Is Overweight:** Just like humans, pets can struggle with maintaining a healthy weight. While a little extra fluff might seem cute, carrying excess weight can lead to serious health issues for your furry friend, including diabetes, joint problems, heart disease, and a shorter lifespan. The good news? With some effort, you can help your pet shed those extra pounds and get back to a healthy, happy life!

**Step 1: Consult Your Veterinarian:** Before starting any weight loss plan for your pet, it's important to visit your veterinarian. Your vet can:

- A. Determine your pet's ideal weight.
- B. Identify any underlying health conditions that might contribute to weight gain.
- C. Provide recommendations for a safe and effective weight loss plan tailored to your pet's needs.

**Step 2: Evaluate Their Diet:** Diet plays a huge role in managing your pet's weight.

- A. **Choose the Right Food:** Switch to a high-quality, lower-calorie pet food if recommended by your vet. Look for options labeled for weight management or reduced calorie.
- B. **Portion Control:** Measure your pet's food using a measuring cup or scale. Overfeeding—even by a small amount—can add up over time.
- C. **Limit Treats:** Treats should make up no more than 10% of your pet's daily caloric intake. Opt for healthier treats like baby carrots, green beans, or specially made low-calorie pet treats.

**Step 3: Get Moving:** Exercise is essential for weight loss and overall health. Exercise is essential for weight loss and overall health.

**For Dogs:** Increase walks or playtime gradually. Play fetch, go for hikes, or try a dog-friendly sport like agility. Aim for 20–60 minutes of exercise daily, depending on your dog's age, breed, and fitness level.

**For Cats:** Use toys like laser pointers, feather wands, or even DIY crinkly paper balls to get your cat moving. Cats are natural hunters, so engaging them in short bursts of play multiple times a day works best.

**Step 4: Track Progress:** Monitoring your pet's progress helps ensure their weight loss plan is working.

- A. **Regular Weigh-Ins:** Weigh your pet monthly at home (using a bathroom scale for smaller pets) or at your vet's office.
- B. **Body Condition Scoring:** Learn to assess your pet's body condition by feeling their ribs and observing their waistline. A healthy pet should have ribs that are easy to feel but not visible, and a waistline that tucks in behind the ribs.
- C. **Adjust as Needed:** If your pet isn't losing weight after a few weeks, consult your vet. You may need to tweak their diet or exercise plan.

**Step 5: Be Patient and Consistent** Weight loss in pets takes time. A safe rate of weight loss is typically 1–2% of their body weight per week. Celebrate small victories along the way, like a more defined waistline or increased energy levels, and stay consistent with their new routine.

Common Mistakes to Avoid: A. Crash Diets: Starving your pet or drastically reducing their food intake can lead to malnutrition and other health problems. B. Unhealthy Treats: Avoid sharing human food, especially high-calorie or fatty snacks, with your pet. C. Skipping Exercise: Regular physical activity is just as important as diet in achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

The Benefits of a Healthy Weight: Helping your pet reach and maintain a healthy weight doesn't just improve their physical health—it boosts their overall quality of life. You'll notice: An increased energy and playfulness. B. Reduced joint pain and mobility issues. C. A longer, happier life with fewer vet visits.

Take the First Step Today! If your pet is carrying a little extra weight, don't wait to take action. With your love, dedication, and the guidance of your veterinarian, you can help your furry friend achieve their ideal weight and enjoy all the benefits of a healthier lifestyle.

Doesn't this sound like what people are told to do to lose weight? Well, maybe not the feather wands or laser toys.

Together, let's keep our pets happy, healthy, and by our sides for years to come!

NOTE: Thank you to Pat's Landing for honoring the Northwoods Humane Society at their January 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday afternoon Bingo event! Exercise is essential for weight loss and overall health.

Dates to Save March 7, 20, May 3, 17, May 1 Bingo at Powell's on Round Lake – 5:30 pm

April 27 – Spay-ghetti and No Balls – Vet Center 5 pm

June 7 – Raise the Woof – Eagles Cover Band – Park Center – 7:30 pm