

TO YOUR *Pet's* *Health*

MAINTAINING A *Healthy Weight*

Dr. Nicole Porter, DVM



Nutrition is such an important topic and will have one of the biggest impacts on your pets overall health. This is a conversation that should start with your veterinarian when you first adopt your new pet, whether as a puppy or kitten, or as an adult. It should continue to be talked about throughout your pet's different life stages.

As a pet ages, his or her metabolism as well as activity levels will start to decrease. This means that they may no longer need the amount of calories that they did when they were younger and more active. However, they often feel like they need to consume the same amount of food. If these changes are not taken into account, then your pet will start gaining weight.

That dreaded word.....obesity. Similar to the obesity issues seen in today's American human population, this issue is becoming a huge (no pun intended) problem in our pet population as well. It has been estimated by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOPP) in a 2017 Survey, that over 56% of the dogs and 60% of cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese. Each year this number continues to rise. Check out petobesityprevention.org.

What are some causes of this epidemic? One of the biggest causes is that people love their pets and equate

love with food. It is certainly not a crime to love your pet, but a healthy weight needs to be determined and goals set to achieve and maintain that weight. We often don't consider that as our pet ages, they do not need as many calories as they did when they were younger and more active. Diets have been formulated that take this into account. Also, remember that every treat your pet receives during the day adds extra calories. So try to minimize the amount of treats given, and look for healthy alternatives, like carrots.

It is important to become familiar with the term body condition score (BCS), how it is determined and where it needs to be maintained. Your veterinarian is a great source for the answers to these topics, and ideas on how to get your pet on target.

Why is this such an important issue? The bottom line is research has shown that if a healthy weight is not maintained throughout an animal's life it can lead to multiple health issues, including but not limited to: diabetes, breathing issues, heart disease, high blood pressure, liver disease or dysfunction, arthritis, cancer and a decreased life span. In other words, your pet may not live as long as it has the potential of living and in the process can develop a disease that may decrease their quality of life.



Blue River

Veterinary Clinic, P.A.

Small Animal Veterinary Clinic

104 E. Commercial, Waterville
785-363-2222 | bluerivervetclinic.com
info@bluerivervetclinic.com