

TOWARDS A HAPPY AND HEALTHY 2008

We would like to wish all our clients and their pets a very happy and healthy 2008.

We hope you enjoyed the festive break and had the chance to enjoy plenty of nice food and drink.

Our pets are often treated to a few tasty extras at Christmas and they may have slightly bigger waistlines than before the holiday. If this is the case then they may need to consider a New Year diet in the same way that many humans do. You could make a New Year resolution to get trim together!

We run free weight loss clinics here for pets here at the surgery and our Veterinary Nurses, all trained in pet nutrition, are a wealth of knowledge and support for clients whose pets are trying to lose weight.

Overweight animals are at a higher risk of developing diabetes, cystitis, respiratory disease, heart disease and exacerbating arthritis and other orthopaedic complaints. They usually become dull and lethargic, less interactive and their quality of life can be seriously reduced.

Pets that are active and only slightly overweight may be able to lose weight just by having their usual ration reduced by a small amount and cutting out titbits. Some owners may try 'light' diets to get their pets to lose weight. These formulations can often be unsuccessful because they are not designed for weight loss; rather their aim is to maintain a steady bodyweight, preventing weight gain in animals prone to becoming overweight.

Pets that are struggling to lose weight and those that are inactive or severely overweight will do better on a prescription weight loss diet and a veterinary supervised weight loss program. We find these particularly useful for overweight cats that may have become completely sedentary except for a trip to the food bowl and litter tray!

For an animal that needs to lose weight and whose calorie requirement is very small, the amount of normal or light food that would have to be fed to provide this would be tiny. Feeding such a small amount could then provide inadequate amounts of the other components of their diet. The pet will feel hungry and be more likely to steal or scrounge extra food. Prescription weight loss diets have been developed to allow pets to safely lose weight whilst maintaining a healthy diet and satisfying their appetite.

It is particularly important that overweight cats are monitored during weight loss programs. Rapid weight loss or periods of starvation, for example if a cat is refusing to eat at all, can trigger a serious condition known as fatty liver. This is when the body mobilises reserves of fat and the liver becomes infiltrated and overwhelmed by all this fat. The condition is life threatening and requires intensive and prolonged treatment if they are to recover.

A typical weight loss program involves an initial consultation with a Veterinary Nurse who will assess the pet's weight and body condition and set a target weight. The pet's activity levels, feeding habits and daily routine will be taken into account when working out a regime suited to them. A suitable weight loss diet will be prescribed and this would be introduced gradually. There are a variety of weight loss diets available in various formulations; dry complete, tins and sachets. A measured amount will be calculated and this will be fed over a 24hr period. Having made the transition to the new diet, then the pet would normally then be checked again by the nurse after 4 weeks. If the weight has not reduced, or has been lost too quickly then adjustments can be made to the amounts fed. If a particular diet isn't suiting then a change to a different one may be tried. The Veterinary Nurses are always available for advice should there be any problems with the program.

Once the target weight is reached then a change back to a maintenance or light diet would be monitored to establish the correct level for that individual. This ensures that the pet does not start to put weight back on again

We have seen many successes from this program and owners are always happy to see their pets regain their vitality and looking trim at a healthy weight. Elderly and overweight pets who haven't done much for years can regain a whole new lease of life once they have shed those extra kilos. The diets are well accepted and enjoyed by the pets so dieting needn't be a hardship.

If you feel your pet may be overweight and could benefit from an individual weight reduction program then why not book them in to see one of our Nurses for a weight consultation. It could be the best New Year resolution you make.

Please call the surgery on 01256 764771 to book an appointment.