

## Fat Pets are Getting Fatter, According to Latest Survey

(Calabash, NC – February 23, 2011)

### ***Over Half the Nation's Dogs and Cats Now Overweight Costing Pet's Years and Owners Millions.***

Obesity continues to expand in both pets and people according to the latest pet obesity study. The fourth annual Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) National Pet Obesity Awareness Day Study found approximately 53% of cats and 55% of dogs were overweight or obese. Preliminary data released from a nationwide collaboration with Banfield, the nation's largest chain of veterinary clinics, reveals pet obesity continues to be a serious problem. APOP founder Dr. Ernie Ward remarks, "This year's data suggests that our pets are getting fatter. We're seeing a greater percentage of obese pets than ever before."

32% of cats in the preliminary sample were classified as overweight by their veterinarian and 21.6% were observed to be clinically obese or greater than 30% of normal body weight. 35% of dogs were found to be overweight and 20.6% obese. "While the general trend of overweight pets has remained fairly steady at around 50%, the number of obese pets is growing. This is troubling because it means more pets will be affected by weight-related diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney disease costing pet owners millions in avoidable medical costs."

The group began conducting nationwide veterinary surveys in 2007 and has seen a steady increase in the percentage of pets classified as obese or at least 30% above normal body weight. In 2007, roughly 19% of cats were found to be obese by their veterinarian and in 2010 that number increased to almost 22%. For dogs, obesity rates escalated from just over 10% in 2007 to 20% in 2010. "One of the reasons we think the obesity rate for dogs has dramatically increased is due to a better understanding of what an obese dog looks like. Veterinarians also realize how critical it is to tell a pet owner when their dog is in danger due to its weight," comments Ward.

Proof that pet obesity is an important topic among veterinarians is the fact that the nation's largest group of veterinary clinics, Banfield Pet Hospital, joined APOP in this year's study. "Banfield is committed to improving the health and well-being of pets—weight-related disorders are a major concern for us," states Dr. Elizabeth Lund, a veterinary epidemiologist and Banfield's Senior Director of Research. "Preventive care is at the core of Banfield's mission and we are incorporating weight assessment and counseling into each patient visit."

Increased awareness can help prevent serious injuries. "As a surgeon, many of the joint problems I treat are related to excess weight. If pet owners could keep their pet at a normal weight, many of these surgeries could be avoided," remarks Dr. Steven Budsberg of the University of Georgia and past-president of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons. "Even more important is the impact obesity has on joints and the arthritic changes that are often crippling. Many overweight pets experience severe joint pain that could easily be prevented by proper diet and exercise."

Ward sums it up, “The bottom line with our annual surveys is that pets are battling excess weight just as their owners are. Our ultimate goal is to help pet owners better care for both themselves and their pets through better diet, exercise and lifestyle strategies.”

#### *APOP Study Preliminary Data*

133 adult cats

383 adult dogs

29 clinics representing 29 US states

average age of dogs 6 years, 2 months

average age of cats 7 years, 4 months

Of the patients participating in the APOP survey on 10/13/2010, 35% of dogs and 31.6% of cats were overweight, while 20.6 and 21.8% were obese, respectively. Overall, 55.6% of dogs and 53.4% of cats were either overweight or obese.

From the initial dataset, 35% of dogs and 32.1% of cats were overweight and 20.6% of dogs and 21.6% of cats were obese. Overall, 55.6% of dogs and 53.7% of cats were either overweight or obese. 6.7% of cats were classified as “thin” or body condition score of 2. 5.2% of dogs were reported as BCS 2. No cats in the study were found to be “underweight” or BCS 1 while 0.26% of dogs were underweight.

Based on these initial estimates, approximately 50 million cats and 43 million dogs are believed to be overweight or obese.

More complete data analysis will be available in a forthcoming peer-reviewed veterinary medical journal.

#### Body Condition Score (BCS)

1 = Underweight, 2 = Thin but Normal, 3 = Normal, 4 = Overweight, 5 = Obese



**Obese Cat** – 19 pounds, Ideal weight 10 lbs.

Analogous to a 5'4" female adult weighing 276 lbs (131 lbs over maximum normal weight of 145 lbs) or 5'9" male weighing 321 lbs. (152 lbs. over maximum normal weight of 169 lbs)



**Obese Dog** – 48 lbs, Ideal weight 20-22 lbs.

Analogous to a 5'4" female adult weighing 317 lbs (172 lbs over maximum normal weight of 145 lbs) or 5'9" male weighing 368 lbs. (199 lbs over maximum normal weight of 169 lbs)

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