

[Pet Obesity Prevention](#)

## Pet obesity prevention

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## 2012 National Pet Obesity Survey Results

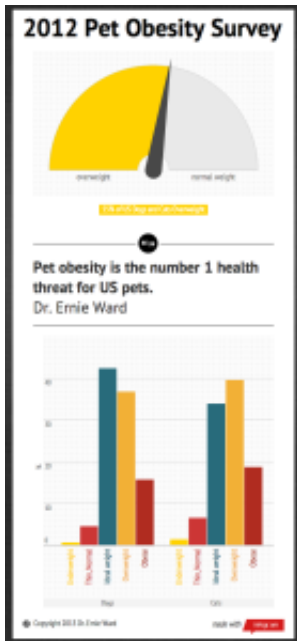
### Pet Obesity Rates Rise, Cats Heavier Than Ever

#### *Fifty-five Percent of U.S. Dogs and Cats Overweight in Latest Veterinary Survey*

**Calabash, N.C.**, March 12, 2013 – U.S. pet obesity rates continued to increase in 2012 with the number of overweight cats reaching an all-time high. The sixth annual National Pet Obesity Awareness Day Survey conducted by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) found 52.5 percent of dogs and 58.3 percent of cats to be overweight or obese by their veterinarian. That equals approximately 80 million U.S. dogs and cats at increased risk for weight-related disorders such as diabetes, osteoarthritis, hypertension and many cancers.

52.5% of US Dogs Overweight or Obese or approximately 36.7 million

58.3% of US Cats Overweight or Obese or approximately 43.2 million



“Pet obesity remains the leading health threat to our nation’s pets.” states APOP’s founder and lead veterinarian for the survey Dr. Ernie Ward. “We continue to see an escalation in the number of overweight cats and an explosion in the number of type 2 diabetes cases.”

New York-based veterinary endocrinologist and APOP board member Dr. Mark Peterson agrees. “The soaring rate of feline and canine obesity is taking a terrible toll on our animals’ health. There is a vast population of overweight cats and dogs facing an epidemic of diabetes. The best preventive measure a pet owner can make is to keep their dog or cat at a healthy weight. Diabetes is far easier to prevent than treat, especially when twice daily insulin injections are needed.”

Veterinary nutritionist and internal medicine specialist at the University of Tennessee’s College of Veterinary Medicine Dr. Joe Bartges cautions that many pet owners don’t recognize when their pet is overweight. “In this survey, approximately 45 percent of cat and dog owners assessed their pet as having a normal body weight when the veterinarian assessed the pet to be overweight.” Dr. Ward calls the phenomenon of incorrectly evaluating an overweight pet as normal “the fat gap.” “The disconnect between reality and what a pet parent thinks is obese makes having a conversation with their veterinarian more challenging. Many pet owners are shocked when their veterinarian informs them their pet needs to lose weight. They just don’t see it.”

Certain breeds showed greater risk for excess weight. Veterinary healthcare providers classified 58.9 percent of Labrador retrievers and 62.7 percent of golden retrievers surveyed as overweight or obese. Surgical specialist Dr. Steve Budsberg of the University of Georgia is particularly concerned about the development of weight-related musculoskeletal conditions. “Once again, our data shows that obesity is rampant and we are certainly setting up more and more dogs and cats for joint problems during their lives. This results in hundreds of millions of dollars in medical bills and countless surgical procedures for weight-related conditions. As a veterinary surgeon I find this extremely frustrating; this disease is easily treatable and even simpler to prevent. Feed your pet less, exercise them more and see your veterinarian at least once a year.”

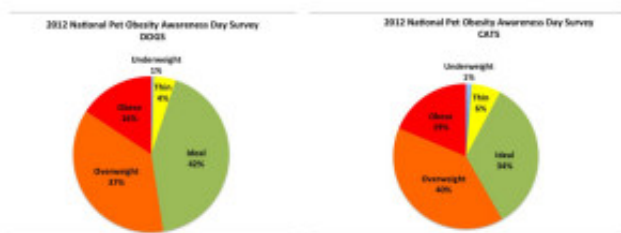
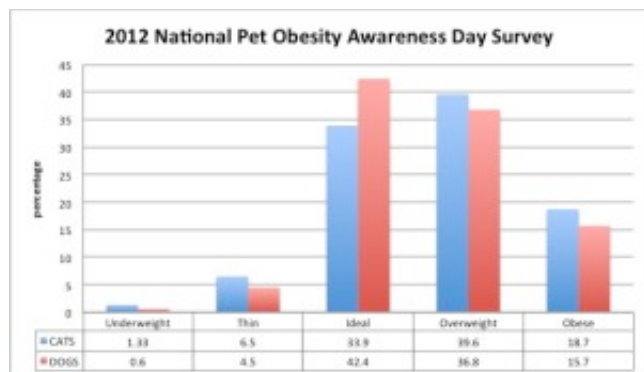
Dr. Ward also sees a clear connection between pet and childhood obesity rates. “The causes of pet and childhood obesity are largely the same: too many high-calorie foods and snacks combined with too little physical activity. Parents need to encourage children to put down their video games and pick up the dog leash to go for a walk. Instead of snacking on sugary treats, share crunchy vegetables with your dog. Eat more

whole foods instead of highly processed fast food.”

“This is a war veterinarians, pet owners and parents must win. Obesity is the number one preventable medical condition seen in veterinary hospitals today and is the fastest growing health threat of our nation’s children. Our goal is to help pets and people live longer, healthier, and pain-free lives by maintaining a healthy weight, proper nutrition, and physical activity. The most important decision a pet owner makes each day is what they choose to feed their pet. Choose wisely. Your pet’s life depends on it.”

*Dr. Ernie Ward, founder of Association for Pet Obesity Prevention*

- The 2012 survey, conducted in October and December 2012, analyzed data from 121 veterinary clinics in 36 states
- 1,485 dogs and 450 cats were assessed
- Cats: 4.4% male, 49.6% male neutered, 6.2% female, 39.8% female spayed
- Dogs: 8.4% male, 39.1% male neutered, 6.0% female, 46.5% female spayed
- Median age of surveyed pets: Dogs – 6 years of age, Cats – 6 years of age
- Dogs and cats were classified by veterinary clinics as: BCS 1 – Underweight, BCS 2 – Thin but normal, BCS 3 – Ideal weight, BCS 4 – Overweight, BCS 5 – Obese
- Based on 2012 survey results and 2012 American Veterinary Medical Association data 80 million U.S. dogs and cats are overweight or obese.
- Based on 2012 survey results and 2012 American Veterinary Medical Association data
  - An estimated 43.2 million cats or 58.3% are overweight or obese (74.1 million U.S. pet cats, 2012 AVMA)
    - 29.3 million cats BCS 4 – Overweight
    - 13.9 million cats BCS 5 – Obese
  - An estimated 36.7 million dogs or 52.5% are overweight or obese (70 million U.S. pet dogs, 2012 AVMA)
    - 25.7 million dogs BCS 4 – Overweight
    - 11 million dogs BCS 5 – Obese
- Labrador retrievers were the most common pure breed in the study (141/1485, 9.5% total surveyed)
  - 58.9% were classified as overweight or obese
    - 42.6% – Overweight
    - 16.3% – Obese
- German shepherds had the lowest reported pure breed Obesity (BCS 5) rate of 2.1%
- 45.8% of dog owners incorrectly identified their overweight or obese dogs as “normal weight” when asked by their veterinary clinic to assess their pet’s current body condition (pet owner’s choices were too thin, normal, overweight, obese)
- 45.3% of cat owners incorrectly identified their overweight or obese cats as “normal weight” when asked by their veterinary clinic to assess their pet’s current body condition (pet owner’s choices were too thin, normal, overweight, obese)



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