

Weight Check

- A weight check is the measurement of your pet's weight and the evaluation of your pet's body condition.
- A weight check should be performed at every veterinary examination and any time you notice changes in your pet's weight.
- Unexpected weight loss may be the first sign of diseases such as diabetes, hyperthyroidism in cats, kidney failure, and cancer.
- Weight gain may occur with endocrine (glandular) diseases such as hypothyroidism in dogs.
- Regular weight checks are a good way to monitor the progress of a pet's weight-loss program.

What Is a Weight Check?

When checking your pet's weight, your veterinarian will not only weigh your pet on a scale but also assess the appearance of your pet's body condition. Body condition is usually evaluated on a scale of 1 to 9, with 1 being too thin, 9 being obese, and 5 representing the ideal weight. A similar body condition scoring system uses a 1-to-5 scale, with 1 being too thin, 3 being ideal, and 5 indicating obesity.

When your pet is the ideal weight, you should be able to feel (but not see) the ribs, with a minimal fat covering. When observing your pet from above, your pet's waist should be visible behind the rib cage. In dogs, the abdomen should "tuck up" behind the ribcage when viewed from the side.

Visible ribs, spinal vertebrae, and hip bones are usually signs that the pet is too thin. When pets are overweight, it is difficult to feel the ribs, and the waist is not visible when viewed from above.

Why Are Weight Checks Important?

Unexplained weight changes in your pet may be the first sign of a health problem. Regular weight checks enable your veterinarian to investigate these problems early. Excessive weight gain by itself may lead to other health problems, including:

- Diabetes (in cats)
- Arthritis
- Ligament and disk ruptures
- Heart disease
- Skin problems
- Shorter life span

Regular weight checks can help you keep your pet at the ideal weight, which can help him or her have a longer, healthier life.

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