

.....just stop eating!” (John Lennon)

It's a fair bet that the late John Lennon didn't own a Labrador Retriever! The Labrador is an example of a breed that lives for food, or anything that remotely resembles food.

We have a particular empathy for those Labrador owners (and owners of other food-obsessed large breed dogs) who struggle with this issue and its implications. A client informed us recently that she came home from work to find her obese Labrador with its empty 10kg bag of Pal Meaty Bites stuck on its head, its belly markedly distended, groaning in pain. The bag had been two-thirds full before she left for work that morning!

In fact a significant percentage of our large-breed dogs are obesity-prone, food-obsessed, and quite content to lie around all day doing nothing. Some have pre-existing joint disease and are unable to engage in a long, brisk walk. Combine these characteristics with the average pet-owners inability to resist those big brown eyes, and our inability to tailor our dog's energy intake with its energy expenditure, and we clearly have a problem on our hands.

What problem?

ALL large-breed dogs in their "senior" years will end-up with some degree of arthritic disease. Some will be coping with joint pain at a much earlier age, courtesy of conditions such as hip and elbow dysplasia, and cruciate ligament disease of the knee.

While genetics and poor design are partly responsible for these debilitating disorders, controlling your dog's body weight will be the single biggest factor that influences the onset of these disorders, and the pain that your dog is tolerating. This week alone I have euthanised two otherwise healthy older dogs for intractable joint pain. Both were significantly overweight.

Solutions

- 1) The Weekly "Washboard" Test: Those of you with growing puppies should run your fingers over your dog's rib cage **ONCE A WEEK**, for the rest of the dog's life. The rib cage should feel like the old washboard that our grandparents used for washing their clothes. Why weekly? You'll be able to pick-up excesses in body condition **AT AN EARLY STAGE**, and make downward adjustments in feeding levels (call us if you need advice).
- 2) Feeding Guidelines: Remember that the feeding guidelines on your pet's food **ARE JUST THAT: GUIDELINES** - They assume that your dog is a cattle-chasing kelpie. In some cases it is appropriate to feed up to 40% less than the recommendation.
- 3) "BUT MY DOG WILL BE DESPERATELY HUNGRY", I hear you saying! If your dog has an ideal body condition, and is begging for more food, then give him a pat, a belly rub, whatever, but don't offer him some of your Camembert Cheese, or anything that seems like common sense? If you must offer your dog a treat, then it must form part of his daily food allowance.



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overweight dog, or a breed that seems to gain weight
when YOU NEED PROFESSIONAL HELP. We have
pets that have a high success rate, and overcome some
of the hunger that dogs experience when they have their food intake reduced
substantially. We will guide you through the process. There is no professional
fee for our nutritional advice.

Kind Regards

Scott & Chris