

## Weight Management Reference Sheet

### 1. Health information

- a. Dogs that become overweight are more likely to develop diseases such as diabetes and arthritis, significantly shortening their working life. As little as 10% overweight can cause arthritis.
- b. 15% over ideal weight can shorten dog's life by up to 2 years.
- c. Slow and steady weight loss is best - more likely to result in long-term success
- d. Reduce the amount you feed gradually rather than making drastic changes all at once. **Cutting the amount of food too dramatically will change your dog's metabolism, making it harder to lose weight and easier to gain it back. e. Weight loss should be 1% of body weight per week.**
- f. 50# dog should lose about .5# per week.
- g. Spayed or neutered dog requires 25% fewer calories after surgery.
- h. Generally, your dog's body weight at one year of age is close to their healthy weight - use as a guide to keep them healthy.
- i. Weigh your dog frequently, especially when first starting a weight loss program. **If you're weighing your dog regularly you'll be able to catch weight gain early and react before you have a bigger problem.**
- j. A successful weight management program will greatly improve the health of pets, reduce the potential for future health concerns, increase the level of activity of the dog and ultimately improve the bond between owner and dog.
- k. Practice regular BCS check for your dog

### 2. Exercise

- a. Work with your veterinarian and Can Do Canines staff to make an exercise plan for your dog.
- b. Start an exercise program slowly and work up gradually. A healthy approach for an overweight dog with no orthopedic restrictions is to start with a 5 minute walk three times a day. Increase gradually with a goal of 30-45 minutes of walking a day. (Take into account the limitations of the particular client.)
- c. Mall walk when weather doesn't permit outdoor activities. Other exercise options are Home Depot, Menard's, Target, Fleet Farm, etc.
- d. Play fetch and/or ask a responsible person to take your dog out to play/walk. Professional dog walkers can be an option. (Of course many clients don't have the resources for this.)

### 3. Healthy snacks/how to treat

- a. Dogs care more about the number of treats they get rather than the size of each treat. It's more rewarding for a dog to receive several small treats than one big one (they swallow either size in one gulp!). Using small treats allows you to reward your dog without adding excess calories.

- b. Measure out a day's food ration and use dog's own food to treat and train throughout the day.
  - c. Baby carrots, apple slices, green beans **in small amounts** are healthy treats and can be cut in small chunks for special treats.
  - d. Dogs should **NOT** be given chocolate, caffeine, grapes, onions, garlic, macadamia nuts, anything with xylitol (some products that may contain xylitol include toothpaste, mouthwash, chewing gum, peanut butter, sugar-free candy, sugar-free breath mints, fruit drinks, jellies, jams, honey, protein bars, baking mixes, medicines, vitamins, supplements, cosmetics, body care products.)
  - e. Have the dog work for their food, game style!
    - i. Use a puzzle toy, muffin tin, rolled up towel, box, basket, etc.
    - iii. Train skills and tricks.
4. Creating healthy habits
- a. Begging is an attention seeking behavior.
  - b. Offer your dog an alternative when they beg:
    - i. Play
    - ii. Grooming
    - iii. Walk, fetch, outing
    - iv. Affection
  - c. Divide a day's rations into several small meals.
  - d. Use some of a day's rations for training.
  - e. Use food balls or puzzles.
  - f. Teamwork - a lifetime lifestyle that includes your veterinarian and Can Do Canines staff.

**At the beginning of a weight loss program, weigh dog every two weeks and discuss food adjustments with staff. When the goal is met it is essential to avoid weight regain. Maintaining the dog's exercise program and feed ration is critical. Weigh dog monthly once ideal weight is achieved and maintained for one or more months.**

Once the dog has reached its ideal BW, careful monitoring is essential to avoid weight regain. A dog's metabolism can change once the ideal body weight has been achieved, resetting at a lower rate. This will necessitate an adjustment in the dog's maintenance diet. (Can only go so low with a feed ration before compromising the dog's necessary nutrients.) Some dogs may regain excess body weight if healthy lifestyle habits are not maintained.

"A successful weight management program will greatly improve the health of pets, reduce the potential for future health concerns, increase the level of activity of pets, and ultimately will improve the client/patient bond." *AAHA Weight Management Guidelines*