

Quality of life of obese dogs improves when they lose weight

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Researchers at the University of Liverpool have found that overweight dogs that lose weight have an improved quality of life compared to those that don't.

It is estimated that approximately a third of the UK dog population is obese. Obesity is a serious disease and can lead to many other health disorders including diabetes, heart disease and arthritis.

A study of 50 overweight [dogs](#), comprising a mix of breeds and genders was undertaken by scientists at the University in collaboration with the University of Glasgow, Royal Canin and the WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition.

Owners completed a questionnaire to determine the health-related quality of life of their dog prior to weight loss. A follow-up questionnaire was completed by the owners of 30 dogs that successfully completed the weight loss programme, enabling changes in quality of life to be assessed. A range of life quality factors were scored, including vitality, emotional disturbance and pain. The quality of life of dogs which succeeded with their weight loss programme was also compared with those dogs that failed to [lose weight](#) successfully.



The results showed that the quality of life improved in the dogs that had successfully lost weight, in particular vitality scores increased and the score for emotional disturbance and pain decreased. Moreover, the more body fat that the dog lost, the greater the improvement in vitality.

The research also found that dogs that failed to complete their weight loss program had worse quality of life at the outset than those successfully losing weight, most notably worse vitality and greater emotional disturbance.

Dr. Alex German, Director of the Royal Canin Weight Management Clinic at the University, said: “Obesity is a risk for many dogs, affecting not only their health but also their [quality of life](#). This research indicates that [weight loss](#) can play an important role in keeping your dog both healthy and happy.”

Dr. Penelope Morris, from the WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition, added: “Strategies for combating obesity and keeping dogs fit and healthy include portion control, increased exercise and diets specifically formulated for overweight pets.”

Established in 2004, the Royal Canin Weight Management Clinic at the University’s Small Animal Hospital UK’s is the world’s first animal [weight management](#) referral clinic and was set up to help tackle and prevent [weight](#) problems in animals such as dogs and cats.

Veterinary surgeons from any general practice in the UK can refer overweight animals to the clinic. The patients receive a thorough medical examination, and are then given a specific dietary plan and exercise regime to follow over several weeks.

The research is published in *The Veterinary Journal* and is available to [view online](#).

Provided by University of Liverpool

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