

Obese dogs helped by 'effective' weight loss trials

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On average overweight dogs lose an average of 11% of their bodyweight when enrolled on a weight loss trial according to researchers who have conducted the largest international multi-centre weight study.

Obesity is the most common medical disease in [dogs](#) in different geographical regions and, much like in humans, is associated with a variety of ailments including: orthopaedic disease, diabetes mellitus, altered renal function and respiratory dysfunction.

In addition to these adverse effects on health, quality of life (QOL) is poorer in obese dogs and lifespans can be shortened.

Additional benefits

Currently, treatment of obesity predominantly involves feeding a purpose-formulated food in restricted quantities to invoke controlled weight loss, as well as increasing physical activity which can provide additional benefits.

Successful weight loss can lessen the chance of developing these ailments and their impact.

Researchers from the University of Liverpool's Small Animal Teaching Hospital and Royal Canin have recently completed the largest ever international weight loss trial in dogs, involving 340 veterinary practices

in 27 countries across the world.

All dogs received a specially-formulated high-protein high-fibre weight loss diet for a period of a three months, and the amount of weight loss was determined. In addition, owners were asked to score levels of activity, quality of life, and food-seeking behaviour throughout the trial.

Intact and neutered dogs

The majority of dogs enrolled in the study loss weight, with the average being 11% of their starting body weight. However, differences were noted between intact and neutered dogs, with neutered dogs losing less on average.

Further, female dogs lost more weight on average than male dogs, with the difference being most pronounced in dogs from North and South America. Owners also reported improvements in activity and quality of life during the study whilst, despite being on a diet, their food-seeking behaviour became less pronounced.

The results of the study have been published in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

Benefits to wellbeing

One of the study authors, Professor Alex German, said: "This is the largest ever international multi-centre weight loss study conducted to date in overweight dogs.

"While the short-term duration of the study meant that many dogs did not reach their target weight, the fact that owners observed improved activity and quality of life suggests real benefits to wellbeing."

A spokesperson for Royal Canin, said: "The study clearly showed that a properly implemented weight loss programme can successfully result in safe and efficacious [weight loss](#) for a large majority of dogs; in this population, 97% of dogs that completed the study lost [weight](#).

"In addition to improvements in quality of life and [activity](#), owners believed that their dogs begged less as the study progressed, findings that can hopefully assure pet owners that returning their pet to a healthy body condition is beneficial and worthwhile."

More information: John Flanagan et al, Success of a weight loss plan for overweight dogs: The results of an international weight loss study, *PLOS ONE* (2017). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0184199](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0184199)

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