

# THE PET CONNECTION

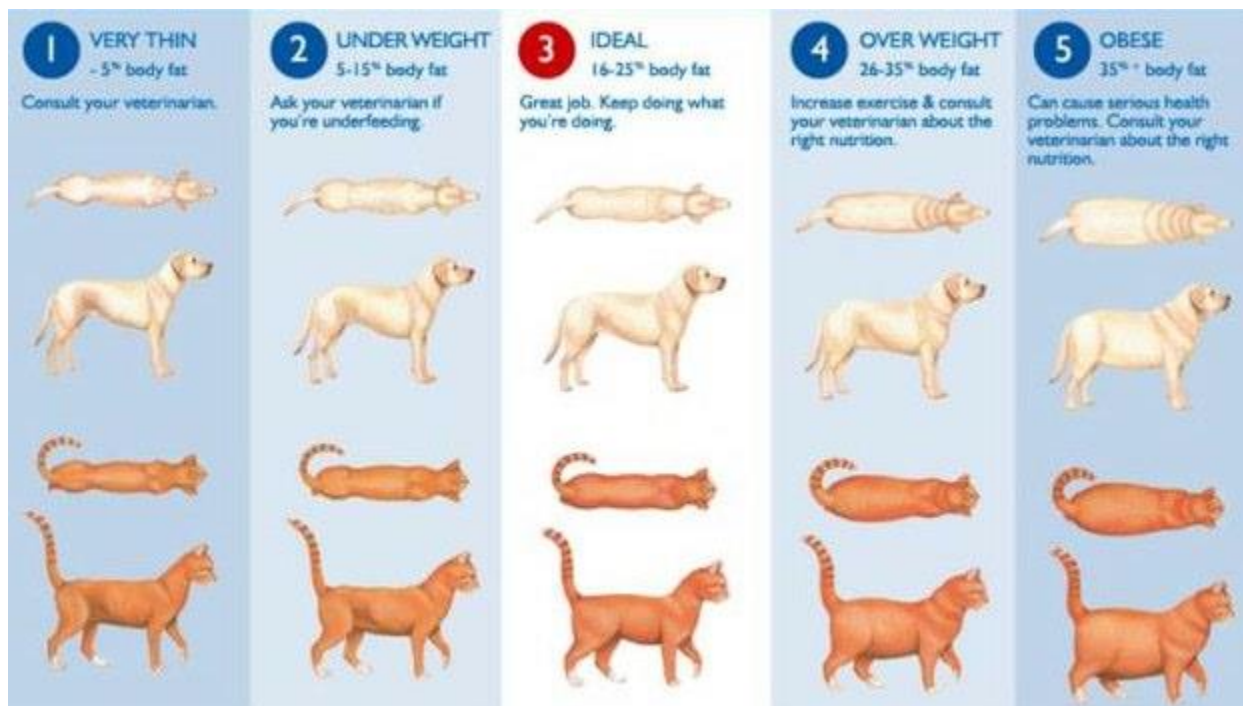
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## Does This Fur Make My Butt Look Fat?

### A Discussion on Pet Obesity

I've heard it over and over again from well meaning owners who bring their pets to us for grooming. "Fluffy really needs a haircut, she looks so fat with all that hair." No, actually Fluffy looks so fat because Fluffy is fat! It's easy to think that fat is cute when it comes to our pets, but obesity in pets, as with humans, has serious health issues associated with it. So, if you want Fluffy to grow old with you you'll need to listen up!

First of all you will have to determine if your furry friend is in perfect weight, just pleasingly plump, or fat enough to try out for the pet version of the TV show "The Biggest Looser"! Below is a chart that might help you to gauge where your furry pal falls in the weight department. If you are really brave, show this chart to a couple of other people and ask which example most closely resembles your pet's physique.



Once you've come up with an honest assessment of your pet's "girth" you can begin to make the needed adjustments to diet and exercise. More on that later. If your pet fell into the "Ideal" category give yourself a high five for good pet parenting!

"You are what you eat" is as true for pets as it is for people. Many commercial pet foods are high in calories while being low in nutrition. Don't let those pet food commercials fool you, most of the ingredients you see on the screen are not going into the bag you just brought home from the grocery store. The only way to know what your pet is eating is to educate yourself and then read those labels!

Also, the amount of food you feed your pet needs to be closely monitored and measured. I can't tell you how many times I've heard this line "We only feed Fluffy ¼ of food a day, we just don't understand why she is so fat." Usually everyone in the family is feeding Fluffy ¼ of a cup of food a day, or the equivalent in pet treats or people treats. And it doesn't matter how small the amount of food Fluffy eats, if she lays on couch all day, she's going to be fat!

Which leads us to our next topic. Along with a good diet your pet needs regular exercise to stay at an optimal weight. Running outside to pee and coming back in does not constitute regular exercise, I don't care how many times a day your pet does it! Exercise needs to be tailored to your pet's age and physical condition, but should include at least some walking on a leash several times a day. This walking will be doubly good for pet mommies and daddies. By the way, cats are very capable of being taught to walk on a leash. Use a harness made specifically for cats rather than a collar, as our feline friends are great escape artists. If you are too afraid to brave the outdoors with your kitty try engaging them with cat toys that encourage them to chase or mimic hunting. This will be good for them mentally as well as physically.

In case I haven't convinced you yet to be concerned about your pet's weight, I saved the best for last, scare tactics! Here is a list of illnesses and health issues associated with obeisity in pets. All of them will in some way shorten the life of your pet, some of them dramatically.

- Diabetes
- Heart and lung disease
- Certain cancers
- Cushings disease
- Bone and joint disease

I hope this article has inspired you to take a closer look at your pet's waistline, and if he doesn't have one to start making the necessary changes to his diet and exercise regime. It is the best kind of love that you can show your pet. Long live Fluffy!

#### PAWS FOR REFLECTION

"If your dog is fat you aren't getting enough exercise."  
- Unknown