



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Your cat is fat

It's your normal morning routine; Fido gets to go on his long morning walk and get the exercise he needs to keep fit. Meanwhile your indoor Kitty is curled up in her favorite chair, not burning any calories. With little to do all day she is getting downright portly, and out of boredom she's eating more from her food dish that is always full of kibble.

The number of overweight cats is at an all-time high, according to annual survey conducted by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention. The survey is in its eighth year and as of November 2014, an estimated 58 percent of cats were found to be overweight compared to 53 percent for dogs.

Part of this problem is due to pet parents' inability to recognize that their furry friend is overweight. According to Joe Bartges, DVM, PhD of the University of Tennessee's College of Veterinary Medicine, 45 percent of cat owners assessed their pet as having a normal body weight when the veterinarian assessed the cat to be

overweight.

Obesity in cats can cause similar health problems as it does in humans, including shorter lifespans and diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and cancer. Feline diabetes and arthritis have never been so prevalent.

But one thing to remember, obesity could be a sign of illness so don't just assume your cat is fat because she's lazy and eats too much. Weight gain may be a sign of serious illness, such as hypothyroidism, or a disorder of the pituitary gland. Before you start Kitty on a diet, check with your veterinarian.

Overweight cats carry extra weight around the middle hanging under the body. Give your cat a gentle squeeze around her middle. If you can't feel the ribs when you rub her side, she likely needs a diet adjustment. An average cat should weigh in at about 9 to 11 pounds.

What is causing your furry friend to gain weight?

If your cat is only eating dry food, she has to eat more of it in order to get adequate amounts of protein. The high carbohydrate amounts in most dry food could possibly alter your cat's blood sugar which can lead to obesity.

Giving your cat treats can also add to her weight. Treats should only be fed occasionally. A rule of thumb is not to let treats exceed 10 to 15 percent of Kitty's daily diet.

"You are what you eat" applies to your cat, too.

Remember that cats are obligate carnivores and are designed to meet their energy needs with calories supplied by protein and fat – not by carbs.

Many pet parents are



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Your overweight cat needs help from you, as a pet parent, to become healthy.

loading up the food bowl with heaping mounds of dry food for their cats to nibble on throughout the day. Unfortunately, not all cats will just nibble. By free feeding or leaving food out 24/7 in multi-cat homes where one cat is overweight, it's impossible for pet parents to keep track of which cat has eaten what.

Studies show outdoor cats spend about 17 percent of their time traveling/hunting. Indoor-only cats are much safer and will stay healthier but do spend far more time catnapping.

So, what can you do?

Start by not leaving food out all day, and schedule specific mealtimes. The average adult cat should have two mealtimes, morning and evening, with a high-quality food that includes recommended amounts of protein, fat and water content.

You can reduce or eliminate dry food and add healthy wet food; it helps your cat stay hydrated.

You may have to buy low-calorie food designed for

overweight cats for a while. But remember to check with your vet with any changes to your cats' diet.

Please don't feed your furry family member table scraps containing fat.

Exercise isn't only important for dogs and people. Use an interactive toy to engage Kitty. Cats like to play when prompted. Hide food treats in puzzle balls and toys around the house when you're not home so your furry friend can "hunt." Enrich your cat's environment by providing toys and lots of places to climb and scratch, such as cat condos.

Indoor cats can be trained to walk on a leash and harness. Or build an outdoor enclosure.

A balanced diet along with exercise will keep Kitty healthy.

Vandalism at BBR pool...



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Sometime overnight on Sunday, vandals threw pool furniture and gym equipment into the pool at Glaze Meadow at Black Butte Ranch.



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