



The Dangers of Obesity in Cats

The main problems we see in overweight cats are diabetes, irritable bowel disease (IBD), arthritis, and hepatic lipidosis (also known as fatty liver syndrome). (In dogs, we see heart problems, diabetes, and arthritis.)

The biggest enemy to overweight cats is "free-feeding" i.e., having cat food out all the time. The second biggest enemy is lack of exercise, which we see especially in indoor cats.

Some recommendations for clients with overweight cats:

1. Don't free-feed. Instead, give your cat two meals per day. Check with your vet to find out the appropriate amount for each meal (we usually recommend 5.5 ounces of canned food per day). It may take awhile to switch your cat over to canned food. We suggest you do it slowly, over several weeks. (In fact, it took one of my cats about six weeks to change to canned food.)

Cats probably resist the change because the dry food is high in carbs and therefore tastes better (just like high-carb human food). For my cats, I put down their food twice a day, for one hour at a time.

Keep in mind that the big, wild cats eat a large amount (like a gazelle) only once every 24 to 48 hours. A cat's body is built to have one huge intake of food, and then they don't eat for awhile, to give their bodies time to digest all the food. Your cat's body is not made to eat little bits of food all day long, every day.

2. Feed your cat canned food instead of dry food. The dry foods are very high in carbs, while the canned foods are a much better balance of carbs and protein (remember that a cat is a true carnivore, which means her body needs a lot of protein). Also, canned food has more moisture (and cats need water just as much as we do). We used to think that canned food was worse for cats' teeth but there is some anecdotal evidence indicating that this may not be true.

3. Make sure your cat is getting enough exercise. For some excellent ideas about how to exercise your indoor cat, go to www.indoorcat.com (click on Problem Solving, then on Increasing the Activity of Your Cat) or www.pets.ca/pettips/tips-65.htm.

4. Remember that weight loss must happen very slowly in cats so that they remain healthy. Your cat should not lose more than half a pound per month.



LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

We want to be more interactive with our readers. Do you have comments, questions, problems, stories, advice? Have you found a new pet-related product that you love? Do your kids have a pet story they'd like to tell us? Let us know!

E-mail us at:
arcf@pdx-petadoption.org

or write us at:
P.O. Box 14956
Portland, OR 97293-0956

-- Debra Barnes, DVM

North Portland Veterinary Hospital

"SPECIAL NEEDS" CAT OF THE MONTH

The Kitty Corner

I'm probably supposed to say something presidential here, like what we did in the past quarter and what we'll do next quarter, but I really want to tell you about George.

George is one of the foster kitties at my house. He's a gorgeous orange-and-white male with golden eyes who's about two years old. He was found eating out of a dumpster behind a McDonald's, and he is one of the sweetest souls I've ever met.

Unfortunately, George has a rare skin disease called pemphigus (PEM-fuh-gus), which is an auto-immune disease that causes his body to attack his skin. When he's having a flare-up, his head, face, neck, backs of his legs, and base of his tail are covered with horrible red sores and red/white pustules -- sort of like the worst acne you can imagine. It's very painful and he feels awful during these flare-ups.

George's pemphigus is particularly bad, so he's now on Leukeran, which is a chemo drug. It does help keep the pemphigus under control, but it also makes him sick, which absolutely breaks my heart.

And what breaks my heart even more is that he remains so nice, gentle, sweet, and loving, even when he's sick. He rubs his poor little head against my legs and purrs like a Harley. He sits in my lap and looks at me, and I know he feels horrible, but still he purrs. It makes me cry. He is so brave and so strong and he teaches me so much.

I just thought I'd share that. And tell you that we're doing well, here at ARCF, and we've helped many, many animals this quarter, and we feel good about what we're doing, and we appreciate all your help and love and support.

--Jackie Fischer, president



J.J.

J.J. has many of the characteristics of the Norwegian Forest Cat. These cats are known for their great intelligence and loving nature, and they also shed less than most other cats. He is a great lap cat and seems to be a very "old soul." When he looks at you, it's as if he's saying, "Hi, how are you? I hope you're well." And he really means it.

J.J. has developed irritable bowel disease, which has been completely controlled with Hills' ZD special diet (found at most veterinary clinics) and a low-stress life/environment. This condition is not known to change the quality or length of the cat's life.



Lily

J.J.'s partner is Lily (who is not a special needs cat). She is curious and loves to monitor all activities. She is very lovey-dovey and would enjoy being in your lap during morning coffee time, computer time, and evening sofa time. She offers kisses all day long, free of charge.

Both J.J. and Lily are friendly with visitors but more hesitant (and less visible) around children. They have been tested, spayed/neutered, and vaccinated. To learn more about this adorable pair, phone Pam at 503-284-8768 or fill out the "I'm interested" form on our website (www.pdx-petadoption.org).

UPDATE:

Setti was adopted by a wonderful couple who saw her picture and article in ARCF's last newsletter. Her story touched their hearts and they could not stop thinking about her. After a couple of weeks they called to see if she was still available. It was clear that they are exceptional animal lovers and even though she had a urinary tract infection at the time, they fell in love and were happy to take her home ... medicine and all. The infection was also stones and Setti consequently ended up having surgery, but she is a young, healthy cat and is recovering well.

Her new guardians adore her bunny gait, and admire her intelligence. They are well-versed in the ways of Manx cats and are thrilled to have her in their home.

SUCCESS STORIES

Lizzie & Leah

A letter from Lizzie & Leah's new adoptive mom, a nurse who adores them:



I first saw Lizzie and Leah in an internet photograph. They were cuddled together in a basket, Leah's eyes half closed and both her front legs wrapped around Lizzie, hugging her. I was enchanted. I e-mailed ARCF and a few evenings later went to meet them and fell in love.

I decided to take them home, but I only had one cat carrier. Chrisi, the foster mom, had another. We thought it would be best for each kitty to have her own carrier. Were we wrong! We wrestled Lizzie into one of the carriers and closed the wire door. Leah went, sadly unresisting, into the other. Lizzie threw herself at the door, pushing both front legs out as far as she could through the openings toward Leah and rattling the door with all her might. She was frantic to get to her sister. So, both cats went into one carrier. They huddled as far as possible from the door and were quiet all the way home.

At home, I put the carrier down and opened the door. I spoke softly, but didn't otherwise bother them. After waiting several hours, I pulled them out and held them briefly, petting them gently and telling them how glad I was they had come to live with me. They must have decided I wasn't going to eat them, because they started exploring a little -- always together and as close to the walls and furniture as possible.

Over the next few days they started eating and playing. Soon Lizzie was coming up to me for a little scratch on the head, and within a day or two she was on my lap, purring loudly. Once Leah saw this, she decided she wanted to be on my lap, too.

Lizzie and Leah are the perfect companions I knew they would be. They love to chase and wrestle; they lie on either side of their "ball in a track" and bat the ball back and forth to each other; they sit side-by-side looking out the window at birds and bugs. They make me laugh. They keep my lap and my heart warm.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Writers wanted. We can always use articles for our newsletter. If you're interested in writing one, please contact Jackie Fischer at 503-249-8250 or e-mail us at arcf@pdx-petadoption.org.
- We are in need of photographers (amateurs welcome!) to take digital pictures of the various cats in our foster homes so we can post them on our website. All you need is a car and a digital camera.
- We need someone who can transport cats and supplies, and run other errands.
- Be a foster home or "emergency" foster home. (Being an emergency home means you will have the animal for two weeks maximum.)
- Stuff envelopes (for the newsletter).

To volunteer, please call Pam at 503-284-8768, or go to our web site and fill out the handy volunteer form.

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Animal Rescue & Care Fund, Inc., is a private, non-profit, tax-exempt corporation funded solely by private donations. A board of directors makes decisions on policy and activities. All funds are used exclusively for veterinary care, food, classified advertising to find suitable homes to place animals, and publishing the quarterly newsletter, "Animal Talk." Volunteers provide good temporary homes until the animals are placed in responsible, permanent homes.

Jasmine & Hyacinth

Jasmine and Hyacinth are so friendly, beautiful, smart, and loving that we can't believe someone decided to move and leave them behind, but that's just what happened.

A friend of ours first noticed them when they were kittens, always outside a particular house that she passed by on her errands. Sometimes there was a little food in the dish on the porch, sometimes no food, or only cigarette butts. There was never fresh water, and in all kinds of weather, these two little cats were outside and eager for visitors to stop and visit with them.

Our friend talked to the occupants of the house about providing regular food for the cats, and about the need for getting them to the vet for vaccinations and spay surgeries. They didn't feel it was their obligation, since they never really wanted them in the first place; they said some neighbors had just left them there.

Our friend started to provide food and soon took the cats to her own vet to be vaccinated, tested, and spayed. The tenants never noticed or cared, and we began to talk about how to get these lovely cats into a more suitable home. She hadn't been able to persuade the tenants to let her take the cats permanently. We were pondering about what strategy might work to convince them when the tenants unexpectedly notified our friend they planned to move, and wouldn't be taking the cats. Usually we hate to hear that, but in this case we were delighted.

ARCF had a foster home available, and the girls immediately settled into the indoor life with plenty of attention, good food, and kitty pals. In a short time, they were adopted by Debbie, a woman who was looking for two loving and intelligent companions. Here is what she wrote, not long after she adopted them:



Just wanted to give you an update on the girls. I think we have all settled into our routine. Hyacinth would like to go out but as I politely tell her every night, she must stay in and protect Jasmine and me. Jasmine is growing more lovey-dovey as the days go by. She now likes to lie on my chest and wash my face and bite my chin. She is very good about nail trimming, now that she knows she gets a treat afterwards. I bought them a new cat tree about a month ago and they both really like it although the bed is the place to be when the weather is cooler.

I think I can say we are now a very bonded family. I can't thank you enough for allowing me the privilege of sharing my home with these two beauties. They capture the heart of everyone who meets them.

ANIMAL PLACEMENT

In February, March, and April of 2006, we placed 59 cats into new, loving and responsible homes.

Our major expenses for those three months were:

Veterinary fees: \$17,818*

Advertising to find new homes: \$571

Food, special meds: \$57**

Newsletter "Animal Talk": \$727

*These expenses also include veterinary care for the dogs and cats of Portland's homeless and a few emergency care visits. We also had expenses for several severely injured pets and very sick ones. All are doing well.

**Most volunteers pay for food and litter for the animals they care for themselves as their contribution to the cause.

SUCCESS STORIES

Leo & Blanche

Leo and Blanche were already a bonded pair when we first met them.

Leo, the more self confident and outgoing one, was found alone in a parking lot by a concerned good samaritan, Jon, during this winter's extreme cold snap. When found, Leo was obviously under six months old, outside, and apparently alone, in temperatures that dropped well below freezing at night. After checking with his neighbors and nearby residents to see if he could find a home for this friendly boy, without success, Jon took him in. Soon after that, Blanche showed up on his porch and refused to leave. After all, Jon had her Leo. Once they were reunited, happiness was restored.

Unfortunately, Jon was facing surgery and a long recuperation, and couldn't keep them. He called us, and was willing to provide a temporary home until space opened up in one of our foster homes. He gave this lovely pair up reluctantly, for their own good.

In their new temporary home, they soon proved to be a friendly, cheerful, and unusually mellow pair, so mellow in fact that when a couple with children came looking to add to their family, Leo and Blanche were one of the pairs they met.

Normally ARCF does not place very young cats like these with younger children because there is an inherent danger to both the cat and the child. When handled wrong, most cats will automatically defend themselves, especially a young cat who does not yet know all the rules of human-cat interaction. But a child cannot be expected to always know what behavior is appropriate either. In such a situation your cat may injure your child and/or develop aversive behaviors.

However, these children had grown up with cats and had a shy cat at home. Neither Leo nor Blanche had ever exhibited any aversive or defensive behavior with people, including children, or with other cats, although Blanche is definitely more shy than Leo.

It was decided to have a two-stage meeting, first with the parents alone, which went very well, and then with the parents and the children. This allowed us to evaluate how the children were with the cats, and all the adults could see how the cats were with the children. The second meeting also went well, so the family was encouraged to take a few days to consider whether these would truly be the right pair for them, and how to make the transition as smooth as possible for both cats and kids.



The decision was made to see how Leo and Blanche would adjust to their home, and after a gradual introduction, they seem to have made a happy and friendly transition to home and family. Blanche was initially shy, but Leo's sunny, outgoing personality encouraged her to explore as well. Just as when we first met them, if Leo wouldn't stay under the bed with her, then she would follow him in his exploration of their new home.

Even Dorrie, the family's shy cat, who spends most of her time hiding, has come out to watch them play and seems intrigued, which is good since the whole family is in love with this wonderful pair of kitties. And all because of the actions of one selfless good samaritan on a cold night in February.

We can always use more success stories (with photos, if possible) from people who have adopted animals from ARCF. If you have one you'd like to share, please contact Jackie Fischer at 503-249-8250 or arcf@pdx-pedadoption.org.

IS IT TRUE ...

Pets can get avian flu?

Cats can contract the avian flu; it is unknown whether dogs can. The avian flu has not reached the U.S. yet, but it has hit Europe, and there are many reports of cats contracting it, particularly in Germany.

One of the biggest groups getting hit is chickens. If a cat eats raw chicken meat from an infected chicken (or otherwise comes in contact with chicken blood or feces), the cat can contract the flu. The recommendations we are hearing from Europe are what you might expect: keep your cats indoors, don't let them have contact with bird meat, blood, or feces.

Also, it is contagious within the feline species, meaning that cats can get it from other cats (but cannot pass it to humans). There is no vaccine yet, since this strain of flu is relatively new. For more information, see www.avma.org.

Cancer at vaccination sites?

This is happening, but mostly in cats. Because of the high incidence, we are recommending that vaccinations are not given all at once; we are tailoring vaccinations for each cat (for example, an indoor cat may receive fewer vaccines); and we vaccinate in several different areas..

Some cats seem to have a predisposition toward getting cancer at vaccination sites, and we have also seen that certain areas of the country are being hit harder than other areas (e.g., in some geographical areas, the incidence is 1 in 10,000, while in other areas it is 1 in 1,000). Here in the Portland area, we have not seen high incidences.

Rabies and leukemia vaccines seem to have a higher incidence than other vaccines, although the cause of this is not known. Also, they are now trying different adjuvants, to see if that makes a difference (an adjuvant is an agent added to a drug to increase or aid its effect).

-- Debra Barnes, DVM
North Portland Veterinary Hospital

ASK THE VET

Feline Asthma: An Update



Feline asthma has been called by many other names, including chronic bronchitis, bronchial asthma, and allergic bronchitis. Regardless of the name, it is a common feline ailment. Inhaled allergens cause sudden

contraction of the smooth muscles around airways, leading to typical clinical symptoms. It is usually impossible to determine which allergens cause asthma in individual cats, but common ones include grass and tree pollens, cigarette or fireplace smoke, various sprays (hair sprays, deodorants, flea sprays, deodorizers), and dust from cat litter.

Feline asthma is found in all areas of the world and in cats of all ages. The prevalence in the general adult cat population is about 1%. The most common symptoms in cats with asthma are wheezing and coughing. The coughing has been described as a dry, hacking cough that could be confused with gagging or retching. Many cats are misdiagnosed as having hairballs! Paroxysms of coughing occur frequently. In mildly affected cats, coughing and wheezing may occur only occasionally. A few cats with asthma are asymptomatic in between acute and severe bouts of airway constriction. The most severely affected cats have daily coughing and wheezing and many bouts of airway constriction, leading to open-mouth breathing and panting that can be life-threatening.

The symptoms of asthma can mimic other diseases, such as heartworm, pneumonia, and congestive heart failure. A diagnosis is reached by using chest x-rays, a complete blood count, a feline heartworm test, and techniques to sample cells from the lower airways (transtracheal wash, bronchial wash, or bronchoalveolar lavage). Chest x-rays may be normal in some cats with asthma, while others will have signs of bronchial inflammation, collapse of the right middle lung lobe, and overinflation of the lungs.

Unfortunately, feline asthma is a chronic progressive disease that cannot be fully cured. Medications can reduce the symptoms of asthma a great deal, but may not be able to eliminate coughing fully. In recent years, veterinarians have found that the most effective therapy for feline asthma may be to use inhalers such as human asthmatics use. A mask and spacer system, called AeroKat®, has been invented to enable cats to use inhalers or puffers. This system is similar to the mask and spacer system used to treat babies and small children.

ASK THE VET (continues)

The most important type of drug for treating feline asthma is a corticosteroid to reduce the chronic inflammation. The most commonly prescribed corticosteroid inhaler is Flovent®. Some feline patients also benefit from another type of medication called a bronchodilator. Bronchodilators help open the airway at times of severe coughing or wheezing. One common bronchodilator inhaler used for humans and cats is Apo-Salvent®.

Some feline asthmatics may be given oral medication. This may be necessary if the patient does not respond well to inhaler-therapy alone, but the amount of oral medication given is usually less than if the cat was not on inhaler therapy at all. Many patients that started asthma therapy a few years or more ago will be only on oral therapy, usually a corticosteroid such as prednisone. While oral therapy may be less expensive than inhaler therapy, it is suspected that inhaler therapy can do a better job and is associated with fewer long-term side effects. Regardless of the type of medication used, it is important to notify your veterinarian if there is any change in your cat's condition while on asthma medication.

Some actions can be taken in the home to reduce the symptoms of feline asthma. Avoiding smoke from fireplaces and cigarettes is very important. This type of smoke tends to settle near the floor in a room at the cat's breathing level. Reducing the use of air fresheners and other household sprays can also be effective. Use human grooming products that are in spray form, such as hair sprays or deodorants, well away from the affected cat. Change to a low-dust clay cat litter or one that is made of an alternate material. Air purifiers may also be helpful. Any activity that is associated with symptoms of asthma in the individual cat, such as going outside in cold weather, should be avoided. Finally, obese cats will benefit from weight reduction.

— Susan Little, DVM
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Summer heat can kill indoor pets

High humidity combined with heat can put your pets at risk of heatstroke — even indoors. It is important to help your pet stay hydrated and keep his or her core body temperature down. And remember that senior pets, very young kittens & puppies, and sick or debilitated animals are more sensitive to hot weather.

Always provide plenty of cool water and, in very hot weather, monitor your pet for symptoms of heat stress: panting; anxiety, possibly seen as pacing; unsteadiness; respiratory distress or hyperventilation; dark red gums; vomiting; or lethargy.

If your pet exhibits any of these signs, and you think he is suffering heat exhaustion, cool him down as quickly as possible by immersing him in cool water, and then wrapping him with wet towels. Then get him to the veterinarian immediately. Heat stroke is a serious, potentially fatal condition.

THE KIDDIE CORNER



Why I Love Animals
by Emma (age 8)

I have loved animals since I was a baby because they're all so cuddly. I wish I could live in their natural habitats because I would take good care of them and make sure that poachers don't kill them.

When I am nine years old, I hope I get a dog because I love animals so much. I would walk it, I would play with it, I would train it, and I would feed it.

I used to have a guinea pig named Gus. I loved him very much. I used to bring him out in the yard, and he would eat lots of grass like a lawn mower.

A couple years ago, we watched our neighbor's guinea pig. She and Gus almost got married. They were so cute together. He smelled our neighbor's guinea pig's bottom.

When he died last year, I was very, very, very sad. I cried a lot because he was one of my best friends.

DOG RESCUE



ARCF has had to suspend our dog program for awhile. We've lost our dog coordinator, and it has been very difficult to find good foster homes for dogs. Fortunately, there are many dog rescue groups in the Portland area. We hope we'll be able to resume it soon. We will still cover dog issues in the newsletter, and we'll be glad to help answer dog-related questions.

If you know of a dog who needs rescuing, call the Oregon Humane Society at 503-285-7722. And just to dispel any myths out there: OHS has a 96% adoption rate for dogs.



Beware of Raw Food Diets

Raw food diets are a growing trend among pet owners hoping to improve their pet's health. However, a study published in the November/December 2003 issue of the Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) found that these diets may cause a potentially fatal salmonella infection.

"While raw food diets are becoming increasingly popular among pet owners, there is a growing body of information showing that these diets pose a health risk not only for the pets that consume them but to their owners as well," says Link Welborn, DVM, AAHA past president.

Shane L. Stiver, DVM, Kendall S. Frazier, DVM, Michael J. Mauel, PhD, and Eloise L. Styer, PhD, from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine, conducted a case study of two cats that developed salmonellosis (salmonella infection) as a result of a raw meat-based diet. The salmonellosis caused gastrointestinal upset, weight loss, and anorexia that resulted in the death of both cats. Salmonella in tissue cultures isolated from one of the cats was identical to cultures from the raw beef used in the cat's home-prepared diet, and the resulting infection was confirmed as the cause of death in both cases. The report is the first to describe the occurrence of salmonellosis in cats as a result of feeding a raw meat-based diet.

The JAAHA study also found that while most human cases of salmonellosis result from direct exposure to contaminated food, there are documented cases of infection due to direct and indirect contact with infected pets. In cats and humans, the very young and very old, as well as those with an immune-compromised state, have the highest risk of infection. Since people often spend a great deal of time in close proximity to their

pets, there are many opportunities for exposure to disease-causing organisms such as salmonella through petting, grooming, food preparation, filling water bowls, and cleaning litter boxes.

The study concluded that cats fed raw meat contaminated with salmonella are at risk for development of salmonellosis and may pose a disease risk to their owners and handlers. Feeding raw meat contaminated by salmonella and recovery of salmonella from the feces of sled dogs and greyhounds has been documented, suggesting a risk of human infection from contact with infected dogs as well as cats. Due to these risks, the AAHA recommends that pet owners not feed their pets a raw-meat based diet and encourages owners to ask their veterinarian for advice regarding a nutritionally balanced diet that is appropriate for their pet's age and lifestyle.

"A substantial body of science-based nutritional data has contributed to the longer life span that our companion animals currently enjoy," says Dr. Welborn. "Your veterinarian uses these resources to provide nutritional recommendations that will help your pet live a long, healthy life."

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YES! I want to help

Animal Rescue & Care Fund depends entirely on your donations to help the animals. Our work includes rescue, medical aid, food and shelter, humane education, neutering/spaying, and more. All workers are volunteers.

Your contribution goes directly to help the animals. All contributions are tax-deductible.

I enclose _____ for humane work.

(\$35 sponsors a cat, but of course, we are grateful for any amount.)

Sponsors can receive a photo and a story about the cat.

I'm interested in receiving a story and a photo.

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