



For immediate release

PET OBESITY EXPANDS IN US

Nationwide study finds half of dogs and cats now overweight or obese, an increase from 2007

Calabash, NC – February 10, 2009. In the US, over 44% of dogs and 57% of cats are now estimated to be overweight or obese according to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP). The second annual National Pet Obesity Day Study conducted in October, 2008, found that from 2007 to 2008, the number of overweight dogs and cats increased by 1% and 4%, respectively.

"Pet obesity continues to emerge as a leading cause of preventable disease and death in dogs and cats. Our pets are in real danger of not living as long as previous generations and developing serious and costly diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, and other largely avoidable conditions," states lead researcher Dr. Ernie Ward.

Obesity rates in cats were highest at 17.8%; dogs were slightly better with 9.6% classified as obese. Approximately 39.6% of all cats and 34.7% of dogs were classified as overweight by a veterinary healthcare provider.

According to the study, 7.2 million dogs are estimated to be obese and 26 million overweight. The number in cats is higher, with 15.7 million estimated to be obese and 35 million overweight.

"These numbers, 33 million dogs and 51 million cats that are overweight, represent a huge problem for everyone. Excess weight causes or contributes to many painful and debilitating conditions. Just as we've become a nation of couch potatoes, our pets have become a nation of lap potatoes—and that's not good for anyone," replies Dr. Ward.

Older animals had a higher incidence of being overweight; 52.1% of dogs and 55% of cats over age seven were found to be overweight or obese.

"This is a particularly concerning discovery for veterinarians. Extra pounds in older pets amplify any pre-existing conditions and complicate treatment. We're seeing more and more diabetes, respiratory, and arthritic conditions in older pets as a direct result of obesity. These are often chronic, incurable, and generally preventable diseases. Pet owners need to understand that a few extra pounds on a dog or cat is similar to a person being 30 to 50 pounds overweight," says Dr. Ward.

Pet owners with heavy pets accurately reported their pet's weight status when asked by veterinary healthcare providers; 71.5% of owners with overweight or obese cats identified their cat as overweight or obese, and 60% of dog owners agreed with their veterinarian's assessment of their dog's weight.

"This tells me pet owners know their pet is too heavy. It's up to veterinarians to help pet lovers get their pet back to a healthy weight," responds Dr. Ward.

Smaller breeds of dogs had more trouble with their weight than larger breeds. Breeds such as Dachshunds, Chihuahuas, and Yorkshire terriers were more likely to be classified as overweight than Labrador retrievers, Golden retrievers, or German shepherds.

“Smaller, indoor-only dogs tend to have more trouble maintaining a healthy weight because they don’t get adequate exercise. Unfortunately, these are also the dogs we’re seeing a high number of weight-related disorders in,” says Ward.

The second National Pet Obesity Awareness Day study was conducted using data collected by 95 US veterinary clinics in October, 2008. In all, 669 dogs aged 1 to 16 and 202 cats aged 1 to 19 were evaluated. Approximately 10% of dogs were classified as obese and 35% as overweight. Approximately 18% of all cats were rated as obese and 40% as overweight.

For additional information on the study, please contact Dr. Ernie Ward or visit www.PetObesityPrevention.com.

About the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP)

APOP was founded in 2005 by Dr. Ernie Ward to promote awareness of the dangers of pet obesity to veterinary healthcare providers and pet owners. APOP is not affiliated with any pet or veterinary company or corporation.

Contact

Dr. Ernie Ward, President
Association for Pet Obesity Prevention
910-579-5550
<http://www.PetObesityPrevention.com>

###