

# OvertheCounter

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## Pet obesity still the biggest UK welfare problem

PFMA calls on the pet sector to collaborate, reports **Carolyn Henderson**

For the second year running, vets say that obesity is the biggest health and welfare concern for the UK's pets.

Almost two thirds of those polled for an annual British Veterinary Association survey cited obesity as the issue they were most worried about. It's an issue that the Pet Food Manufacturers' Association has been tackling for seven years – and the PFMA has called for a collaborative response from the pet care sector.

"As with humans, obesity is a very serious health issue for pets and can lead to lifelong and life-threatening illnesses such as heart disease, breathing problems, diabetes and arthritis," said a BVA spokesman. "Not following or understanding pet food feeding guidelines, providing too many treats and snacks, and a lack of exercise are all contributing issues. Many owners also give their pets human food as a treat; one biscuit can equate to a whole packet when fed to an animal."

A PFMA spokesman said: "Since the release of our first in-depth pet obesity report in 2009, PFMA has strived to support pet professionals and encourage owners to stop over-feeding and under-exercising pets. A key finding in our report was pet owners'

lack of understanding around what constitutes a healthy size.

"We worked in partnership with our members, vets, retailers and pet charity organisations to create a range of tools, including Pet Size-O-Meters, to help owners maximise the well-being and life expectancy of their pets. Treating with unsuitable 'human' foods and guesstimating portion sizes are also key factors.

"Our research has shown that while there is a greater awareness of obesity and its consequences among owners, this isn't really translating in to action and we believe a collaborative response from the pet care sector is important to address this."

Obesity is common in dogs. Gudrun Ravetz, president of the British Veterinary Association, said it is vital that the correct body weight and feeding habits are established from puppyhood and that owners understand dogs must be given the right food for their age, breed and size alongside getting enough exercise.

"Using body condition scoring allows vets and owners to assess and monitor a dog's weight and can be applied to any breed," she said.

See [www.pfma.org.uk](http://www.pfma.org.uk) for more information.

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### Equine health

Feeding broodmares



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### Livestock nutrition

Balancing silages



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