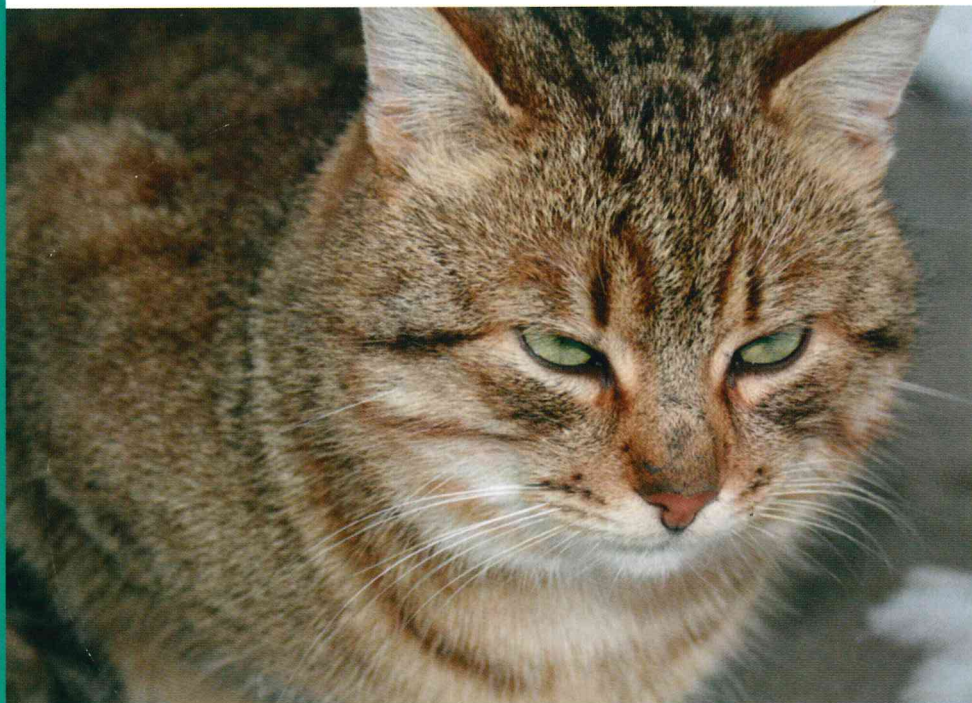


Pulling your WEIGHT

Michael Bellingham, chief executive of the Pet Food Manufacturers Association (PFMA), believes now is a key time for the pet care profession to help address the problem of obesity and educate pet owners on healthy feeding and weight management



In March, the PFMA released some new research which shows that while vets feel up to 45 per cent of all pets they see are overweight, two in three (63 per cent) pet owners believe their pet is the correct weight, highlighting a disparity in awareness.¹

The PFMA's *Pet Obesity: Five Years On* research arrives five years after its first report, allowing pet owners and professionals to see how the needle has moved, gauging whether Britain is winning the battle for a fitter, leaner nation of pets.² The latest results reveal that three in four (77 per cent) vets believe pet obesity is on the rise, while two in three (63 per cent) owners feel more important problems face their pets. According to the study, the vast majority (93 per cent) of pet owners say they would be concerned to discover their pet is overweight, yet only one in three (37 per cent) know how to check this, indicating that existing tools and guidelines are simply not getting enough cut-through.³

To help spread the word about ideal pet weight and support the good work already being carried out across the country PFMA will launch a #GetPetsFit campaign this May

To help spread the word about ideal pet weight and support the good work already being carried out across the country PFMA will launch a #GetPetsFit campaign this May. We need to engage pet owners emotionally, helping them realise that feeding and exercising their pet to the optimum level can result in an extra two years of active life.⁴ The #GetPetsFit campaign will provide the perfect opportunity to do this and we hope that with the help of pet care professionals, we can work to resolve this important issue.

How pet care professionals can help SAY – raise awareness of the issue to help educate pet owners

Promote good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle as “number one” to help Britain’s pets get fitter and live up to two years longer.

SUPPORT – the #GetPetsFit Campaign

Kicking off on May 7 nationwide, a relaunched Weigh in Wednesday initiative will encourage pet owners to monitor their pet’s body size and seek advice on pet health:

- Visit www.pfma.org.uk/weighinwednesday and download a free kit. The kit contains campaign posters, website banners and client handout materials including Pet Size-O-Meters (for cats, dogs, rabbits and birds), a pet food diary and weight and body condition log. Or, request a pack online and we’ll send you one.
- Display posters in your store, run weekly Weigh in Wednesday events from May 7 and find and share inspiration on the #GetPetsFit campaign Facebook page at www.facebook.com/GetPetsFit

MOTIVATE – pet owners to continue to make a difference

Provide guidance to pet owners and give them a Pet Size-O-Meter, pet food diary and pledge poster to take home and use. Encourage them

to commit to a 12-month dietary programme and monthly weigh-in to ensure continued wellbeing for their pets.

Educating pet owners, driving behaviour change

The *Pet Obesity: Five Years On* study highlights a number of points to be addressed when educating pet owners on ideal pet weight, regarding overfeeding, treating and lack of exercise. Currently, two in three (68 per cent) pet owners do not follow professional guidelines when deciding portion size, with 30 per cent taking a cavalier approach, relying on instinct. Though treats should be fed occasionally and taken into consideration with overall food intake, nearly half (48 per cent) of owners are feeding pets treats more than twice a day, with one in three (36 per cent) using potentially toxic human food to treat. Supporting diet with exercise is key in tackling pet obesity.

All the tools are in place for pet owners and pet care professionals to better pets’ lives together – now is the time to use them.

We need to engage pet owners emotionally, helping them realise that feeding and exercising their pet to the optimum level can result in an extra two years of active life

¹ London Vet Show survey, Q. 6, 2013; *Pet Obesity: Five Years On* – LM research in association with PFMA, 2014

² *Pet Obesity: The Reality in 2009* – TNS research in association with PFMA, 2009

³ London Vet Show survey, Q. 14, 2013; *Pet Obesity: Five Years On* – LM research in association with PFMA, 2014

⁴ (Dogs fed to lean condition from puppyhood throughout life can live for two more active years) Purina research – Richard D Kealy PhD et al, *JAVMA*, vol. 220, 2002