

# PFMA

## Help owners to keep their pets fit

**A**s the pet care sector well knows, obesity is as much a problem for pets as it is for people.

It is easy to prevent but with shifting perceptions of what constitutes a healthy size, an increasing tendency to treat pets as one of the family - including them at family meal times, plus an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, obesity has become a seriously stubborn issue with seriously concerning consequences.

Studies have shown that pets can live longer if fed correctly. Keeping our pets healthy so they can live a long and happy life is what all us pet parents strive for, so there is no greater incentive.

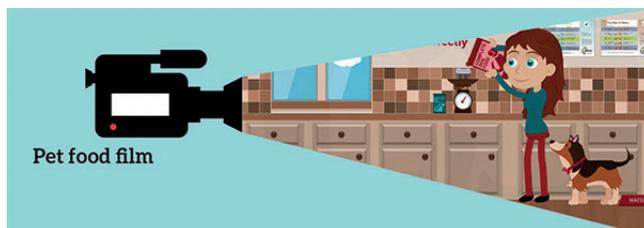
### MONITORING GROWTH FROM AN EARLY AGE

Feeding a good quality, nutritionally balanced prepared pet food appropriate to a pet's life stage (e.g. growth, adult, mature/senior) is the first step in providing optimum nutrition. Vets highlight the importance of starting out on the right track and ensuring puppies and kittens grow at a healthy rate. Feeding the right diet and the right quantity of food is key to this.

Puppy growth charts have been developed and are used widely by vets to determine if a puppy is following the expected growth pattern. With regular monitoring, it is easy to step in if growth goes off track and to nip it in the bud before it becomes difficult to resolve.

### SIZE CHECK AT HOME

The perception of what is a healthy sized pet has become blurred and the PFMA Pet Size-O-Meter is a great way for owners to reconnect with reality. Pet Size-O-Meters are available for cats, dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs and birds. They are simple, easy to use charts providing a step by step guide of how owners can check whether their pet is in shape or not. If you would like a poster to display in store, please contact [info@pfma.org.uk](mailto:info@pfma.org.uk) and we will have this delivered to you free of charge.



### PAW-TION CONTROL

Our research has shown that one of the root causes of overweight pets is owners not following feeding guidelines. This is a great area for a pet care professional to help explaining the role of the guideline and highlighting that this is a guide and owners will need to adjust how much they feed depending on a variety of factors including level of activity, age etc.

Scraps and treats should be limited – any additional treats given should make up no more than 10 percent of the pet's daily calorie



intake – at least 90 percent of the calories should be from the 'complete' pet food.

Feeding guidelines can vary between the brands so advise owners to check this if they are changing diets.

### LET'S GET PETS FIT

Insufficient exercise is also a causal factor of pet obesity and the general feel amongst the veterinary profession is that pets are simply not getting enough. Cats like short bursts of activity and a general recommendation is 4 x 10-minute bursts per day. As well as daily walks for dogs, playing games daily is important as this also provides mental stimulation. Exercise and play isn't just for cats and dogs, all pets benefit and the welfare organisations provide guidance on recommended activities for the different pet types. Toys are a great tool to encourage more activity for pets of all types.

### EVER WONDERED WHAT'S IN PET FOOD AND HOW IT'S MADE?

Wonder no more! The PFMA has come up with a short video to show you how pet food is designed, what's in it, the regulations and quality checks they go through and the nutritional balance in pet food. Check it out here: [www.pfma.org.uk/pet-food-film/](http://www.pfma.org.uk/pet-food-film/)

## Dog Size-O-Meter

Size-O-Meter Score:	Characteristics:
<b>1 Very Thin</b> More than 20% below ideal body weight	• Ribs, spine and hip bones are very easily seen (in short haired pets) • Obvious loss of muscle bulk • No fat can be felt under the skin
<b>2 Thin</b> Between 10-20% below ideal body weight	• Ribs, spine and hip bones easily seen • Obvious waist and abdominal tuck • Very little fat can be felt under the skin
<b>3 Ideal</b>	• Ribs, spine and hip bones easily felt • Visible waist with an abdominal tuck • A small amount of fat can be felt
<b>4 Overweight</b> 10-15% above ideal body weight	• Ribs, spine and hip bones are hard to feel • Waist barely visible with a broad back • Layer of fat on belly and at base of tail
<b>5 Obese</b> More than 15% above ideal body weight	• Ribs, spine and hip bones extremely difficult to feel under a thick layer of fat • No waist can be seen and belly may droop significantly • Heavy fat pads on lower back and at the base of the tail

