

Feline Obesity Risk Factors

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In the Literature

Rowe EC, Browne WJ, Casey RA, Gruffydd-Jones TJ, Murray JK. Early-life risk factors identified for owner-reported feline overweight and obesity at around two years of age. *Prev Vet Med.* 2017;143:39-48.

FROM THE PAGE ...

Obesity is an important health issue for pet cats, and prevention is critical. This prospective study attempted to identify early-life risk factors for becoming overweight/obese.

Owners of 375 kittens were asked to complete surveys at 4 specific time periods in the kittens' lives, beginning at 2 to 6 months of age and continuing through approximately 2 years of age. Results largely agreed with previously reported investigations of obesity risk factors. At 2 years of age, 25.3% of the study population was overweight or obese according to owners. The proportion was 36.8% when BCS was measured by a veterinarian.

The data set is large and complex, with many confounding and interrelated variables. However, positive associations were found for cats being overweight/obese at around 2 years of age. The 6 factors considered significant included:

- ▶ Owner reporting cat as overweight/obese at 1 year of age
- ▶ Use of treat rewards at 18 months of age
- ▶ Feeding greater than or equal to 250 g per day of wet food at 2 to 6 months of age
- ▶ Feeding dry food as the only or major part of the diet (>50%) at 2 years of age
- ▶ Previous veterinary recommendation for weight loss or no previous veterinary comment on BCS
- ▶ Owner belief that overweight BCS was ideal or lack of concern that it was too high

... TO YOUR PATIENTS

Key pearls to put into practice:

- 1** Clinicians should educate owners about the health risks of obesity and explain how to assess ideal body condition for pets. Prevention is preferable to reversing obesity.
- 2** BCS should be assessed in all patients, and, if indicated, a weight-loss plan should be discussed with owners.
- 3** Owners should be educated about appropriate feeding practices so that overfeeding is avoided regardless of diet type used. Portion-controlled feeding of specific amounts is indicated to avoid overeating; ad libitum feeding is not advised.
- 4** Kitten owners should be educated about avoiding inappropriate weight gain, especially after spay/neuter. Balancing the need for growth with the need to avoid overfeeding can be challenging. Neutering can result in unwanted increases in food intake and subsequent obesity, which food restriction can prevent.

Suggested Reading

- Backus RC, Cave NJ, Keisler DH. Gonadectomy and high dietary fat but not high dietary carbohydrate induce gains in body weight and fat of domestic cats. *Br J Nutr.* 2007;98(3):641-650.
- Brooks D, Churchill J, Fein K, et al. 2014 AAHA weight management guidelines for dogs and cats. *J Am Anim Hosp Assoc.* 2014;50(1):1-11.
- Larsen JA. Risk of obesity in the neutered cat. *J Feline Med Surg.* 2017;19(8):779-783.
- Serisier S, Feugier A, Venet C, Biourge V, German AJ. Faster growth rate in ad libitum-fed cats: a risk factor predicting the likelihood of becoming overweight during adulthood. *J Nutr Sci.* 2013;2:e11.