

# Eppie—A Case Example

In the March issue of *Clinician's Brief*, the Consultant on Call article, *Canine Obesity—A Treatable Condition*, discussed diagnosis and treatment of this common nutritional health problem in dogs. Below is a case example demonstrating how to develop a weight loss protocol for a canine patient.

Eppie is a 6-year-old spayed female Labrador retriever that has gained 13.5 pounds (6.1 kg) over the past 3 years. Her obesity is beginning to interfere with her ability to perform her job as a guide dog.



**Step 1: Acknowledge that obesity is present.**

On physical examination, Eppie weighs 96.5 lb (43.4 kg) and has a body condition score (BCS) of 8 (based on 9-point scale) (Figures 1 and 2). The rest of the physical examination is unremarkable.

**Step 2: Obtain thorough diet history from owner.**

Eppie has been consuming a “light” commercial dry dog food for the past year, but has continued to gain weight. Her owner is uncertain about the exact quantity of food she is feeding. Eppie also receives dog treats, but they are not given consistently every day.

**Step 3. Form a partnership with the owner.**

Short- and long-term success of a weight loss program largely depends not only on the client's acceptance of the need for weight loss, but the client's willingness to perform the tasks necessary to achieve these

goals. Lifestyle changes are necessary; however, keep in mind the importance of maintaining the owner–animal bond with any change in lifestyle.

**Step 4: Correct and control any underlying diseases.**

Eppie is screened for hypothyroidism and results are within the reference range.

**Step 5: Induce a negative energy balance.**

The most effective way to do this is to combine energy restriction with exercise. Exercise is many times a forgotten component of a weight loss program; however, the beneficial effects on metabolic rate make it critical.

Because it is difficult for the owner to increase the amount of Eppie's exercise, the Canine Club at the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine arranges a schedule to walk Eppie regularly.



Eppie at the beginning of her weight loss program. She weighed 96.5 pounds and had a body condition score of 8/9.



Eppie 2.5 years after starting her weight loss program. She weighs 63.7 pounds and has a body condition score of 5/9.

**Step 6: Calculate caloric requirements.**

**Method 1\***

1 × resting energy requirement (RER):  
 $RER = 70 (\text{body weight}_{\text{kg}}^{0.75})$   
 $70 (43.4 \text{ kg}^{0.75}) = 1183 \text{ kcal/day}$

**Method 2\***

Maintenance energy requirement (MER) × 60%  
 $MER = 1.6 \times RER$   
 $MER = 1892 \text{ kcal/day}$   
 $60\% (MER) = 1135 \text{ kcal/day}$

**Steps 7 & 8: Choose an appropriate diet for weight loss and divide total daily caloric intake into 2 meals.**

Veterinary Formulas Weight Loss—Restricted-Calorie Canine Dry (iams.com) was chosen. This diet contains 217 kilocalories per cup; Eppie receives 1135 kilocalories per day, which equals about 5 cups of food (2.5 cups of food twice a day).

**Step 9: Allow treats to be given (this is part of the human–animal bond).**

Veterinary Formulas Weight Loss—Restricted-Calorie Rewards (iams.com) are used for treats. Each biscuit has 13 kilocalories; Eppie is allowed 2 per day.

**Step 10: Decide on a rate of weight loss.**

The goal is 1 pound of body weight loss per week.

**Step 11: Weigh the dog at least once every 2 weeks.**

Week	Body Weight (lb)
0	96.5
3	93.3
6	91.5
9	88.5
12	84.4
16	80.4

Eppie is losing about 1 pound per week, which is right on track. However, results for the next 2 weight checks show that Eppie’s weight loss has plateaued.

What options exist for modifying Eppie’s weight loss program?

1. Increase exercise; and/or
2. Recalculate kilocalorie requirements using new body weight.

Option number 2 was chosen and Eppie’s weight loss program continued on track.



**Outcome—Were the goals achieved?**

Eppie achieved the short-term goal of losing weight to reach an ideal BCS. She also achieved the long-term goal of maintaining an ideal BCS for over 2.5 years (Figures 3 and 4). ■

\* Please keep in mind that initial caloric calculations are only starting points; they may need to be modified according to an individual dog’s response.