



Feline Forum

Courtesy of:

Is your kitty overweight?

If you think your kitty looks a little heavier than usual, you might be right. According to Dr. Janet Scarlett at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, 25 to 30 percent of cats seen by veterinarians are overweight. And while there are no standard weights for cats, your veterinarian can tell by looking at and feeling her whether she weighs too much.

Just like their human companions, cats that are overweight are often so because they eat more calories than they use. The caloric intake required varies from one cat to another. If she's inactive or spayed, she'll need less food to

maintain her body weight than her energetic, unneutered friend.

If you think your kitty is overweight, it's important to find out why. There may be an underlying medical cause of the weight gain, and a too-heavy cat is more prone to diabetes mellitus, lameness, and skin disease.

Have your veterinarian examine your cat to rule out a medical condition. Once she gets a clean bill of health, you and your veterinarian can plan an effective weight-reduction program that allows her to lose the extra pounds slowly. A weight control program will most likely include changing your kitty's diet and increasing her activity. To help reduce caloric

intake, your veterinarian will probably recommend cutting out extra treats between meals — that means also making sure she doesn't steal food from the other animal dishes in your household.

Another important reason to involve your veterinarian in your cat's weight loss program is to ensure her nutritional requirements are maintained. Providing you don't give in to her begging and loud meowing and feed her more than she needs, her ideal body weight should be easily attainable.

And remember, the effort will go a long way toward ensuring your kitty's healthy.

Clicker training

Did you know that your cat could be trained to perform a variety of tricks and tasks? With a clicker and some treats — and a lot of patience — she'll be able to do things you thought were only done in the circus by the big cats. Or, by a kitty that belongs to someone else. For example, you can teach your cat to come when called, to fetch and return an object to you, or to sit before it gets petted. Used when the cat does what you want, the clicker, a treat, and lots of praise tell him

he's done the right thing. And, your cat's age doesn't matter. According to animal behaviorists there's no reason an older cat can't be taught new tricks.

So, why not try this: Hold a morsel of food over your cat's nose and then move it up and back, between his ears. As the cat's nose goes up, his rump goes down. When the rump is down, click and give him the food. Given repetition and consistency, your cat will soon learn to sit when you click.

Buying a carrier

- Make sure your cat can stand and turn around.
- If going on a long trip, buy a carrier with food and water holders.
- Make sure there are no sharp, protruding pieces that might injure the cat.
- Portability is important. You should be able to hold the carrier in one hand.
- If you can find one, buy a carrier with a side door or top door rather than a screen at one end.
- If you're flying, try to keep your cat in a carrier under your seat. Particularly on shorter flights, it may be worth sacrificing total kitty comfort by having kitty with you, even in a snug carrier.
- Use a roomier carrier for your cat when traveling by car.

The information for *Feline Forum* has been prepared by the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY.
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