



Protein & Weight Management

"It's easier said than done." This is the feeling you may experience if you are facing the challenge of slimming your dog down to normal body condition. Ignoring soulful eyes and beguiling ways as a dog coaxes for treats, table food or extra food in its bowl can be a formidable task. Don't give up. An overweight dog may be susceptible to many health problems.

Equally important is protecting your dog's health as you manage its weight. Choosing a weight management diet with at least 25 percent protein helps provide this protection.

Such a diet is formulated to help maintain lean body mass and provide protein reserves to support a dog's immune system.

Lean body mass describes the muscle component of a dog's body. It accounts for about 95 percent of a dog's metabolic rate, the measure of how a body "burns" energy. Lean body mass "burns" more calories than body fat does. If lean body mass is lost, a dog has less energy to expend and "burns" fewer calories from the accumulation of body fat. A weight management diet for a dog with at least 25 percent gives a dog the protein required to build or replace muscle and tissue.

Because protein is constantly being broken down in a dog's body, new protein is produced in a process known as protein turnover. This process provides the protein reserves that support a dog's immune system during times of injury or infection. If protein levels in a dog's diet are less than 25 percent, the rate of protein turnover is reduced and a dog's immune system can be weakened.

The importance of protein in a dog's diet is underscored when we consider that in a dog's body, over half the dry matter is protein. It is required for the growth and maintenance of almost all tissues of the body, including bone and muscle. Consequently, keeping protein at an adequate level is essential for a dog's good health.

If you choose a weight reduction diet for your dog, please remember that these diets are formulated for normal, healthy adult dogs who tend to be overweight. They are not appropriate for puppies or for pregnant or nursing females.

How should you determine if your dog should be on a weight management diet? A simple "rib check" usually answers the question. Use both hands (with thumbs on the backbone) and run your fingers over your dog's rib cage. If you cannot easily feel the outline of each rib, your dog is

overweight. If you have questions about your dog's body condition or how to manage its weight, consult your veterinarian.

A final thought

As in human nutrition, the healthiest way for a dog to shed extra weight is to follow a sound dietary and exercise program designed to reduce body weight gradually under medical supervision.

Desc:

Learn the healthiest way for a dog to shed extra weight with proper protein consumption and exercise.