

OBESITY IN GREYHOUNDS

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Obesity is defined as body fat in sufficient excess to compromise normal physiological function or predispose to metabolic, surgical, or mechanical problems. In our adoptive Greyhounds we are not addressing the individual who packs on 2 to 3 lbs. over its normal racing weight after they have adapted to the "couch potato life style ", but the pet who now weighs 15-25%+ over its ideal weight. Many breeds, like the Miniature Poodle, Whippet, Afghan, and Greyhound are naturally "lean" and should not have the body shape of a Labrador Retriever or English Bulldog.

So what's the big deal if my Greyhound is a bit fat? Actually these over weight canines are at risk for development of several conditions:

1. **Cardiovascular:** Not unlike their human counterparts, substantially over weight dogs have increased resistance and work added to their circulatory system and can develop heart disease and high blood pressure (secondary renal disease, etc.). "Heat Stroke" is also more common in obese pets.
2. **Anesthesia:** Over weight individuals are at higher risk for anesthetic complications when under sedation or general anesthesia. These individuals breathe shallower which can lead to poor gas and vascular exchanges.
3. **Musculoskeletal System:** Most racing greyhounds have received micro trauma to bone, joint, ligament, and muscle tissues even if they appear normal and "sound". Greyhounds with sustained injuries or fractures have even greater concerns for Osteoarthritis. Increased weigh, constantly adds stress and "wear and tear" to these areas and will aggravate or be additive to any degenerative progression.

Ok, how did my greyhound get obese? There are two major players" in the answer; the dog and the owner. First, it is the nature of the dog to please its master. Instinctively the dog will finish the meal it is offered because that is what he is suppose to do! Secondly, we all have a tendency to "spoil" our "Greys" as they respond to all attention directed to them. So, this often translates into more treats, a bit of table food or extra portions. We think the greyhound must need this because he's always hungry and happy when we treat him. WRONG! He wants to please the owner and responds as if rewarded.

PLAN OF ACTION

For those, otherwise healthy, greyhounds that are over weight or obese, a simple plan of action can be taken which doesn't interfere with the attention the pet receives or any special diet foods. Dogs do not measure calories or size and weight of foods or treats. It is simply a treat or food!

Here is a suggestion: Give 1/2 size treats. Reduce the actual daily volume of food by 10-20% (when doing this, divide the feedings into one additional time in the 24-hour period). Now your Greyhound will be getting fed more often (more attention) and actually receiving less quantity. The weight reduction should be monitored every 2-4 weeks. Your pet doesn't have to lose 5 or 10 lbs. per month, but a gradual progressive weight loss. With success, you will have a happier, healthier, and potentially longer-lived companion.