

Helping pets stay slim for the holiday season

Do you want your pudgy pooch or chubby cat to slim down before the holiday entertaining begins? You're not alone.

"Obesity is very common in household pets, and can be a contributing factor in many canine and feline diseases," says Dan Carey, a veterinarian with The Iams Company, makers of Eukanuba and Iams premium pet foods.

Answer the following questions to determine if your pet needs a low-calorie diet in order to trim down for the holiday season.

1. Does your dog get less than 20 minutes of exercise a

day?
2. Does your neutered cat spend two-thirds of his day sleeping?

3. Do you give your pets liberal amounts of leftovers and treats?

If you answered yes to two or more questions, you may want to ask your veterinarian about "light" foods that provide the same high nutrition and good taste as regular pet

foods, but with less fat to help cut calories. In the meantime, here are some important things to look for when choosing a sound diet food for your pet.



★ Reduced fat. Diet pet foods should have lower fat levels than regular foods; between 9-12 per cent is optimal. The best foods use carbohydrates to replace some of the fat content. Carbohydrates are less caloric than fat, but are more readily digestible than fiber, and do not decrease the digestibility of other nutrients.

★ The right amount of quality fat. A certain amount of fat must be present in pet food so that dogs and cats can obtain essential fatty acids, such as linoleic and arachadonic acids. Fat also lends itself to shiny, glossy skin and coat. Look for low-calorie foods with poultry or pork fat, rather than poor-quality, difficult-to-digest beef tallow.

★ High-quality, animal-based protein. The less active, or overweight, dog or cat nonetheless needs protein for

body functions, muscle tone and normal growth. Animal-based protein sources, such as egg, chicken and fish, are best utilized by your pets' simple stomachs and short intestines.

★ Optimal fibre level. Some light diets cut calories by substituting large amounts of fibre for fat.

On the surface, this might seem like a good idea, but it is a back-door method for calorie reduction and does not take

pets' unique nutritional requirements into consideration.

Excess amounts of non-nutritive, non-digestible fibre in pet food interfere with the digestion of fat and nearly all other nutrients. As a result, dogs and cats on high-fibre diets have increased stool volume and more frequent stools.

For optimal well-being, the fibre level for less active animals should be the same as for moderately active dogs and cats.

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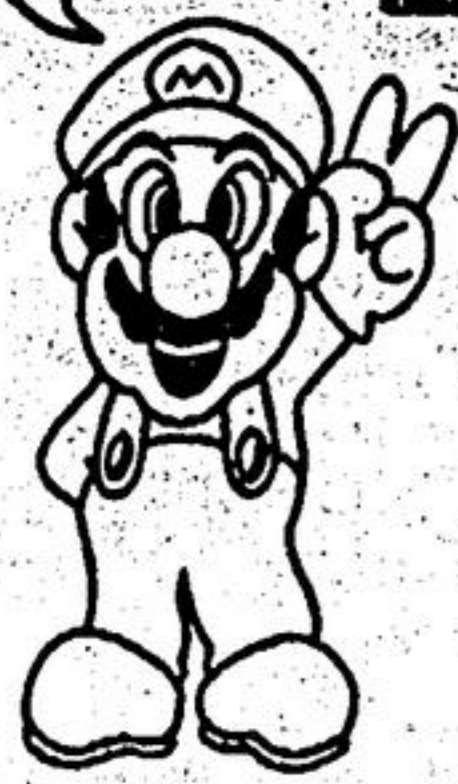
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