

Tubby tabbies need new diet

"Fat is no more a health barometer than a dog's nose, and a 'pleasingly plump' pet could be suffering from malnutrition," say authorities at the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). Obese or overweight pets have one thing in common with overweight humans — an improper diet. In recent months the association has focused attention on fat cats and pudgy budgies.

"We have received some comments concerning malnutrition in pets, so we conducted a survey. Frankly, we thought we would find that it was the exotic or uncommon pets that are suffering from malnutrition," said Dr. Louis J. Rossini, a spokesman of the AAHA.

"We were somewhat amazed to find that 90 percent of the veterinarians felt we should focus malnutrition warnings on dogs, 87 percent on cats and 35 percent on birds. Very few mentioned 'other pets.'"

Diet also was the most important consideration for more than 80 percent of the veterinarians responding to the question, "What do you feel your clients should know about cats?"

It is sometimes hard for the average pet owner to determine if their pet is overweight or malnourished, and an overweight pet may be suffering from malnutrition.

SOME of the problems of pet weight control are similar to human problems; it's a complex area, and each case requires individual attention. Here are a few rules supplied by Rossini:

- Weigh your pet. Get on a scale and note your weight. Then hold the pet and get on the scale again. Subtract the difference to get the weight of your pet.
- Ask your veterinarian if your pet is about average in weight. He can usually spot a weight problem without using a scale.
- Watch out for high calorie treats. Caution your children not to feed pets high sugar content foods which provide excess calories.
- Ask your veterinarian for specific diet advice for your pet.

"Cats are about the only creatures we know which can actually suffer pain from a disease known as steatitis, which is caused by an improper diet of too much red meat tuna," Rossini explained. "If birds eat only seed, you will probably develop a fat bird suffering from malnutrition. A good, well-balanced diet and a moderate exercise program is the best answer for birds and animals, as well as man. "Most pets will respond to a prescribed reducing diet with some weight loss in a month or two. If your pet doesn't lose weight within three months, consult your veterinarian."



County parks offer courses

Waterford Oaks Park Activities Center begins a new series of summer-time recreation classes in dog obedience and guitar July 10.

The eight-week dog obedience classes include those for beginners at 7 p.m., advanced dogs at 9 p.m. and a conformation (show) at 8 p.m.

Summer strummers will be able to tune up with guitar courses for children (beginners at 6 p.m. and intermediate players at 6:45 p.m.) and adults (beginners at 7:30 p.m. and intermediates at 8:15 p.m.). Cost for all dog obedience and guitar classes is \$20.

Waterford Oaks Activities Center also offers a series of yearling square dances this summer from 8-10 p.m. on July 12, 26, Aug. 9 and 23. Additional square dances are conducted every Friday through July and August from 8-11 p.m.

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