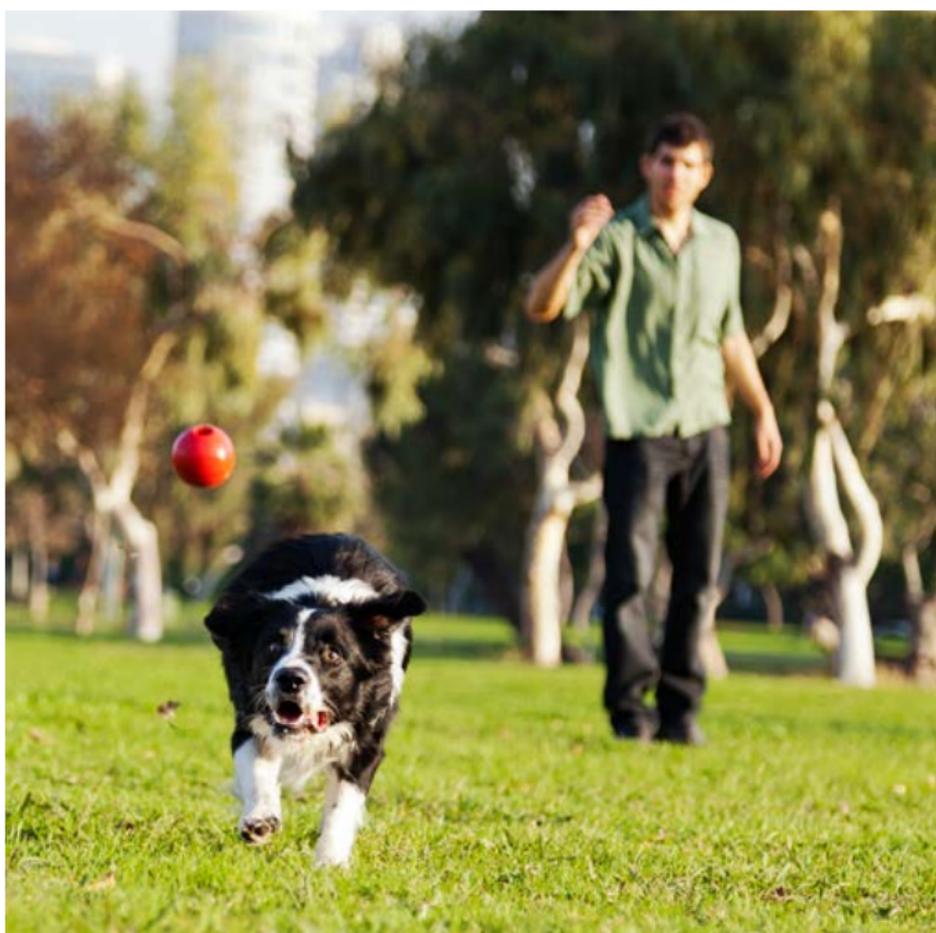




Feeding and exercise

FOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY PET



Animal Welfare Foundation

bva-awf.org.uk

AWF is the charity led by the veterinary profession

Registered Charity No. 287118

Providing the right food and exercise for your pet's health and welfare

The right food and exercise choices are as important for your pet as they are for you. The problems our pets can face if not fed or exercised correctly are the same as we can suffer; difficulty in the heat, difficulty exercising and serious illnesses like diabetes and arthritis which all together will reduce the life expectancy of your pet.

An overweight pet ***will simply not live as long*** as one at a healthy weight.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 in England and Wales, and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 means owners are responsible for ensuring that the welfare needs of their animals are met. This means that we must, by law, not only prevent our pets from suffering, but we must provide them with the things they need to make them healthy and happy, which includes providing a suitable diet and exercise.

Start today by knowing how to give your pet the right food and exercise for a long and healthy life

Our busy lives mean finding information on how to do the right thing for our pets can sometimes prove overwhelming. We want to help you with simple, convenient advice, based on your pets' welfare needs, that ensures providing a healthy lifestyle is manageable and fun for you and your pet.

How can the weight of my pet affect their welfare?

Providing for your pets' 'five welfare needs' will ensure they can lead both healthy and happy lives. As well as affecting their health, weight can also affect behaviour. An overweight pet may not be able to carry out their essential behaviours such as socialising, grooming or playing, which could lead to frustration, stress and even fear.

The five welfare needs

The Animal Welfare Act 2006



ENVIRONMENT

A suitable place to live



DIET

The right food in the right amounts



BEHAVIOUR

Being able to behave normally



COMPANY

For animals that need to live together or apart depending on their need



HEALTH

Protecting your pet from pain, injury and disease

How do I know my pet is a healthy weight?

Every pet has an ‘ideal weight’ that ensures its ability to lead a healthy and happy life.

The ideal weight can be achieved by considering a combination of:

- The type of food you feed them
- The amount of food you feed them and any other food that they may eat elsewhere
- The treats you give them in addition to their food
- Their day-to-day exercise and activity
- The size, conformation and breed of the individual animal

These five things have to be balanced and any change in one may require a change in another.

For example:—If your cat goes from living outdoors to indoors, the type and amount of food will need to change as their activity levels have altered.

It is important to weigh your pet regularly and be familiar with their ideal weight, which will be individual to them and their needs. Regular weighing allows you to make any changes to ensure those needs are being met.

How do I weigh my pet?



You can take your pet to your veterinary practice to weigh them and discuss their diet and exercise at any time.

Weighing your pet at home—place cats, small dogs and rabbits directly onto the weighing scales, or place into their basket. Weighing scales can be inaccurate for smaller pets, so instead you can hold your pet and then subtract from your own weight.

If you notice any changes in your pet's weight, ask:

- Have I changed the type of food they have?
- Have I changed the amount of food they have?
- Have I given more treats than usual?
- Have exercise or activity levels changed?
- Has the coat changed? Sometimes being overweight can be hidden by fur or a long coat.

How can I feed my pet for health and welfare?

- **Feed your pet for the different stages of their life**—Kittens need more calories than adult cats, a mature dog will need less calories than an adult dog. *Ensure you feed your pet for their 'lifestage'.*
- **How to use pet food feeding guidelines**—Portion control is everything. Feeding guidelines are **only** a guide and may not suit all pets or take exercise levels into account. Adjust them as you need to, all the time checking weight and body condition score to achieve your pet's ideal. *Ask your vet/vet nurse for help at any time.*





- **Always weigh your pet's food** — How much is a 'scoop' or a 'handful' of food? Weighing out your pet's food is the only way to make sure they are having the correct amount every time. *Weigh out a week's worth in one go, storing in individual tubs or bags — this can save you time each day.*
- **Make mealtimes private and fun** — Split your dog and cat's daily allowance into at least two meals for dogs or four meals for cats. Cats like privacy to eat so ensure they are allowed to eat undisturbed. Dogs would love to eat with you, but this can lead to bad habits and the temptation to give treats, so put them in a separate room when you eat. *Consider an activity/puzzle feeder for your pet as they provide mental stimulation, activity and the meal all in one!*
- **Rabbits should have hay or grass as the bulk of their diet** (their own body size per day) with green leaves and veggies and only a very small amount of nugget (not muesli) feed. It is vital to encourage natural foraging habits by hiding (toilet rolls are good) and scattering food or using feeding puzzles — you can even make your own!



Talk to your
veterinary practice
at any time
for help
and advice



How can I TREAT my pet and maintain good health and welfare?

We all love to treat our pets! Treats can be used to reward good behaviour, to help us when training our pet and to allow bonding opportunities. It is ok to treat your pet, but it is important to know the truth about treats.

- A treat is anything your pet is given *in addition* to their daily allowance of food.
- Commercial treats and human food are all usually *very high in salt and calories*.
- Feeding human food can lead to the development of ‘begging’ behaviour and many human foods are also toxic to our pets, such as chocolate, artificial sweetener xylitol, raisins and grapes.
- Commercial treats for rabbits are often very high in sugars, so should be avoided. Instead use a small piece of broccoli, turnip or other veg—they will love this too!

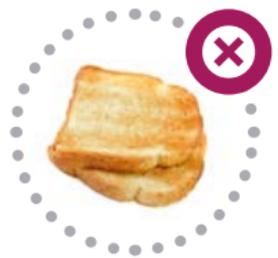




Praise, your pet's favourite toy or game, grooming time and cuddles are all a great alternative to treats, so consider replacing treats with these things.

If you do give treats:

- Do not give human food or feed from your plate.
- Be sure to use treats sparingly, and use attention, games and contact instead of a food reward.
- Cut down daily food when they have them or make sure they do a bit more exercise.
- Use some of their daily food allowance as an alternative to treats.





How can I keep my pet active for health and welfare?

It's not just about the food! Exercise, activity and lifestyle are also important for your pet, ensuring their welfare needs are met and they can express natural behaviours. Remember, every animal will have individual preferences, some activities will suit some pets more than others, and it's important for you to find out what makes your pet both happy and active.

- **Provide a good selection of toys** for your pet. For cats ones that allow natural prey and hunting behaviour to be stimulated are important.
- **Provide an activity/puzzle feeder.** Mental stimulation is vital for your pet's health and welfare and activity feeding allows your pet the chance to be stimulated whilst they enjoy their food.
- **Provide a scratching post for cats** — save the furniture and allow your cat a chance to exhibit normal behaviour by scratching regularly.
- **Provide lots of space for your pet to run, jump, stretch and also rest.** Cats like to live on different levels — so provide sleeping areas up high and in quiet spots. Older pets like warmth, so place beds close to the radiator. Rabbits need space to exercise, forage and play.

- Groom your pet regularly—**just a few minutes a day** can help the coat and your pet will love you for it. It also provides a good opportunity to check your pet's health and condition and notice any changes.
- **Walk your dog both on and off the lead**; take your dog on scent walks, walks where you play games, walks where you socialise, walks where you can let them swim. If your dog cannot be let off the lead, then consider a longline lead to allow running. Older dogs will benefit from shorter, more regular exercise to help ageing joints.

Great toys for happy, healthy cats

- Catnip toys
- Fluffy mice, squeaky toys, scrunched up paper, dangling toys
- Cardboard boxes for food foraging
- Puzzle feeders

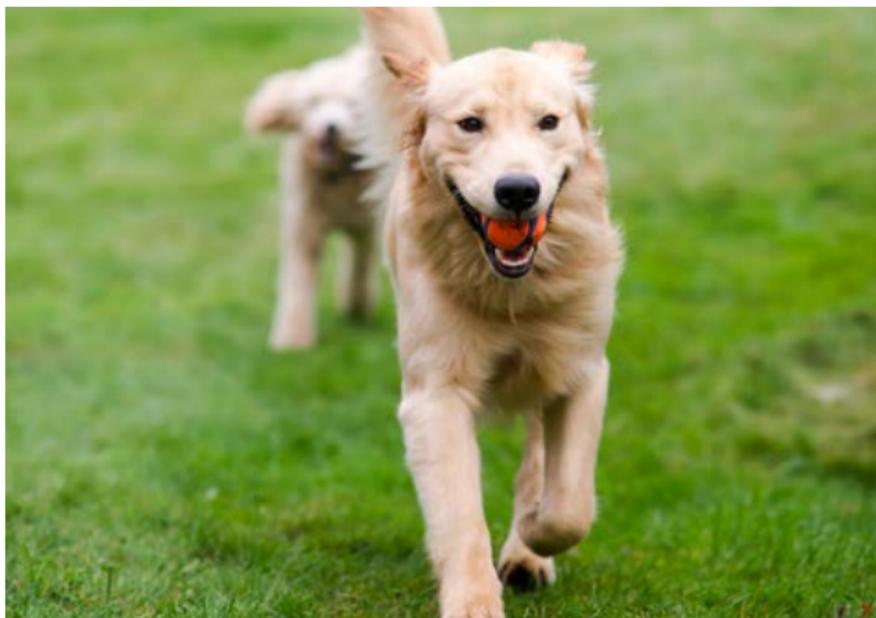
Great activities for happy, healthy dogs

- Swimming
- Digging in a sand pit
- Socialising with other dogs
- Fetch and catch
- Puzzle feeders

A great home for happy, healthy rabbits

- One with a 'bunny' companion
- A safe space to run around every day
- Opportunity to forage feed every day
- A clean, tidy space that is cleaned every day

Start today by ensuring you are giving your pet the right food and exercise to live a long and healthy life.



Further information

You can download the AWF's other leaflets and resources from our website or you can request copies by contacting us:

AWF, 7 Mansfield Street, London W1G 9NQ

Tel: 020 7908 6375

Email: bva-awf@bva.co.uk

Web: bva-awf.org.uk

Twitter: [AWF_VETS](https://twitter.com/AWF_VETS)

Advice on how to Body Condition Score your pet

pfma.org.uk/pet-size-o-meter

pdsa.org.uk/petfitclub

Advice on having a happy, healthy pet

icatcare.org:8080/advice/keeping-your-cat-happy

pdsa.org.uk/pet-health-advice

rabbitwelfare.co.uk

Animal Welfare Act 2006

gov.uk/government/publications/animal-welfare-act-2006-it-s-your-duty-to-care