



www.PetObesityPrevention.com
9256 Beach Drive
Calabash, NC 28467
910-579-5550

For Immediate Release

What Not to Feed Your Pet: Vets Warn Pet Owners on National Pet Obesity Awareness Day

Calabash, North Carolina - Oct. 7, 2010 – Everyone’s heard that we humans have a little weight problem. Okay, a huge weight problem. Studies show we’re now sharing those excess pounds with our pets. On October 13, 2010, the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) will set out once again to determine how many of our furry friends are too fat.

“As a practicing veterinarian for almost twenty years, I’ve never seen this many overweight pets.” remarks Dr. Ernie Ward, founder and president of the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention. “We’re witnessing the super-sizing of America’s pets before our very eyes.”

All that super-sizing carries a hefty price. Veterinary Pet Insurance (VPI) claims it pays out over \$14 million in weight-related claims each year. “It’s not only the cost in tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars in largely preventable medical expenses that concerns me.” reports Dr. Ward. “It’s the incalculable suffering and needless loss of life that compels me to take action against obesity. Pet obesity is by far the greatest health threat our pets face.”

APOP will conduct its fourth annual National Pet Obesity Awareness Day Study October 13, 2010 in almost 1,000 veterinary clinics nationwide. “This year we’ve teamed up with Banfield Pet Hospital, the largest group of veterinary clinics in North America, to increase the number of pets in the study. Banfield’s commitment to helping us wage the war against pet obesity is a welcome addition to our efforts.”

Last year’s study revealed 45 percent of dogs and 58 percent of cats were classified as overweight or obese by their vets. This equals almost 90 million pets at risk for developing diseases such as arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney and respiratory disease and many forms of cancer.

Ward says high calorie treats are a major cause of the problem. “Many of today’s treats are so full of sugar and fat that I call them “Kibble Crack” because they can cause the same sorts of changes to brain chemistry as illicit drugs.” Ward goes further to state that pets are often fed several treats per day. “I’m not against treats; I’m against too many treats. It’s no different than eating dessert at breakfast, lunch and supper and then enjoying a few in-between meal snacks. We’ve become a nation of mega-treaters.”

In Ward’s book on pet obesity, “Chow Hounds: Why Our Dogs Are Getting Fatter,” he calculates the impact even small treats have on a dog’s weight. “If an average 20-pound dog eats a Snausages Snausomes Peanut Butter and Apple Flavor treat, it’s the same as an average human eating half of a large Domino’s Pizza with Extra Cheese.”

Other of Ward’s “What Not to Feed” treats include:

- 1 Purina Busy Bone, size small/medium fed to a 40-pound dog is similar to an adult eating 4 McDonald’s Egg McMuffins
- 1 Milk-Bones Large Dog Biscuit fed to a 60-pound dog is the same as an adult eating 1 Snickers Bar

- 1 Pup-Peroni fed to a 10-pound dog is equal to an adult eating a Little Debbie Fudge Brownie
- 1 Premium Pig Ear fed to a 40-pound dog is no different than an adult drinking 6 12-ounce Coke Classics
- ½ hot dog wiener fed to a 20-pound dog is equivalent to an adult eating an 8-ounce choice, lean broiled T-bone steak
- ½ tablespoon Jif Creamy Peanut Butter fed to a 40-pound dog is the same as an adult eating 1 McDonald's Sausage Patty
- 1 McDonald's Cheeseburger eaten by a 60-pound dog is similar to an adult munching on 2 Taco Bell Taco Supremes and 1 20-ounce Coke Classic

“Because pet treats aren’t required to list calories on their labels, most pet owners aren’t aware of the dangers many treats pose. Our organization’s goal is to raise awareness about the causes and treatments for pet obesity in order to help pets and people live longer, healthier lives.”

For more information, visit www.PetObesityPrevention.org.

Contact:

Dr. Ernie Ward

DrWard@PetObesityPrevention.com

9256 Beach Drive

Calabash, NC 28469

Ph: 910-579-5550

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