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U.S. Pet Obesity Steadily Increases, Owners and Veterinarians Share Views on Pet Food
The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention Reports Increased Number of Overweight Pets in U.S. in 2017, Pet Owners and Veterinary Professionals Express Opinions on Key Pet Nutrition Topics

Ocean Isle, North Carolina – April 19, 2018 – Pet obesity in the U.S. increased in 2017, affecting 60% of cats and 56% of dogs, according to the [Association for Pet Obesity Prevention](#) (APOP). APOP’s tenth annual survey revealed opinions of pet owners and veterinary professionals on several pet food issues such as the benefits of corn, dry versus canned foods, whether or not pet food has improved, and the best sources of pet dietary recommendations.

“The number of pets with clinical obesity continues to increase.” states APOP Founder, veterinarian Dr. Ernie Ward. “We’re continuing to see more pets diagnosed with obesity rather than overweight. Clinical obesity results in more secondary conditions such as arthritis, high blood pressure, kidney disease, and certain forms of cancer. Pets with obesity also have reduced quality of life and shorter life expectancy.”

In the October 2017 clinical survey, 56% of dogs and 60% of cats were classified as overweight (body condition score (BCS) 6-7) or obese (BCS 8-9) by their veterinary healthcare professional. These results indicate an estimated 50.2 million dogs and 56.5 million cats are above healthy weight, based on 2017 pet population projections provided by the American Pet Products Association (APPA). In 2016, APOP found 54% of dogs and 59% of cats were overweight or obese in the U.S.

Pet owners and veterinary professionals were questioned about pet obesity, diet and nutrition, and sources of pet food advice. 58% of pet owners and 54% of veterinary professionals reported they had tried to help their own pet lose weight. Low-calorie and weight loss diets combined with increased exercise were the most cited weight loss strategies. When asked what was the “biggest challenge to exercising your dog,” “Too busy” was the most common response, topping 25% of all pet owners and 43% of veterinary professionals. Behavior issues (21% pet owners and 19% veterinary professionals), inadequate access to exercise areas, and physical limitations of owner and pet completed the top four reported challenges.

48% of pet owners stated that their veterinarian failed to recommend a maintenance or routine diet for their pet and 15% commented that they “had to ask” to receive a pet food recommendation. 50% of surveyed veterinary professionals replied they offered maintenance pet food recommendations.

When asked if they believed “commercial pet food is better or worse than ten years ago” (the melamine pet food recall was in 2007), 63% of pet owners and 76% of veterinary professionals reported pet food in 2017 was “better.”

“People food” for pets was generally considered “unhealthy,” with 65% of pet owners and 67% of veterinary professionals agreeing.

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Organic pet food was perceived as “healthier” by 39% of pet owners, down from 43% in 2016, while 40% reported “I don’t know.” 26% of veterinary professionals categorized organic pet foods as “healthier,” up from 15% in 2016. 17% of veterinary professionals stated “I don’t know” when it comes to organic pet foods being “healthier” for pets.

When asked “Where do you receive the best dietary recommendations for your pet? (check all that apply),” pet owners and veterinary professionals differed in trusted sources.

	Veterinarian	Online	Pet Store	Friend	Breeder	Trainer
Pet Owners	57%	52%	15%	10%	7%	6%
Veterinary Professionals	78%	32%	9%	10%	4%	5%

Dry dog food dominated canned or moist with 53% of pet owners and 69% of veterinary professionals feeding dry kibble to their pets. Canned dog food was preferred by 17% of pet owners and 12% of veterinary professionals.

Cats were more evenly split in the APOP survey when it comes to feeding dry or canned foods. Dry cat food was fed by 49% of pet owners and 57% of veterinary professionals and canned/moist food by 38% of pet owners and 33% of veterinary professionals.

The effect of canned pet food on oral health seemed to cause considerable confusion among both groups. When asked if “feeding a predominantly canned or moist food will damage your pet’s teeth,” 35% of pet owners and 31% of veterinary professionals said “Yes.” 39% of pet owners and 58% of veterinary professionals responded “No,” while “I don’t know” earned 26% of pet owner responses and 11% of veterinary professionals.

Raw diets continue to divide these two groups, although support of raw diets among pet owners appears to be diminishing and confusion increasing, at least according to this survey.

- “Do you think raw diets are healthier for dogs and cats?”
 - “Yes” – 28% of pet owners (35% in 2016) and 13% of veterinary professionals (15% in 2016)
 - “No” – 28% of pet owners (30% in 2016) and 72% of veterinary professionals (71% in 2016)
 - “I don’t know” – 45% of pet owners (35% in 2016) and 15% of veterinary professionals (14% in 2016)

Pet owners also reported confusion and disagreed with veterinary professionals about low- and no-grain diets and corn.

- “Are low- or no-grain diets healthier for dogs?”
 - “Yes” – 46% of pet owners and 21% of veterinary professionals
 - “No” – 12% of pet owners and 63% of veterinary professionals
 - “I don’t know” – 43% of pet owners and 16% of veterinary professionals

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- “Do you think corn is healthy for dogs?”
 - “Yes” – 5% of pet owners and 50% of veterinary professionals
 - “No” – 63% of pet owners and 30% of veterinary professionals
 - “I don’t know” – 31% of pet owners and 20% of veterinary professionals
- “Do you think corn is healthy for cats?”
 - “Yes” – 3% of pet owners and 34% of veterinary professionals
 - “No” – 63% of pet owners and 46% of veterinary professionals
 - “I don’t know” – 34% of pet owners and 20% of veterinary professionals

About the Research

The annual obesity prevalence survey is conducted by APOP. Veterinary practices assessed the body condition scores of every dog and cat patient they saw for a regular wellness exam on a given day during the study period. Body condition scores based on a whole-integer, nine-point scale and actual weight were used in classifying pets as either underweight, thin, ideal, overweight or obese. The 2017 survey included the assessment of 1,610 dogs and 714 cats by 178 veterinary clinics.

Dogs (n=1,610)			Cats (n=714)		
Body condition score (1 to 9)			Body condition score (1 to 9)		
1-3	(18)	1.1%	1-3	(16)	2.2%
4-5	(691)	42.9% (normal)	4-5	(270)	37.8% (normal)
6-7	(586)	36.4% (overweight)	6-7	(189)	26.5% (overweight)
8-9	(315)	19.6% (obese)	8-9	(239)	33.5% (obese)

The online questionnaire was completed by 1,215 pet owners and 544 veterinary professionals from October 11 to December 31, 2017.

About the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP)

The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2005 by Dr. Ernie Ward with the primary mission of documenting pet obesity levels in the United States to raise awareness of the issue and its negative impact on pets. The APOP Board of Directors is made up of veterinary practitioners, nutritionists, surgeons, and internal medicine specialists. APOP conducts annual research to substantiate pet obesity prevalence levels in the United States and offers resources and tools to veterinarians and pet owners to better equip them to recognize and fight pet obesity. More information about APOP can be found on their website www.PetObesityPrevention.org.

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2017



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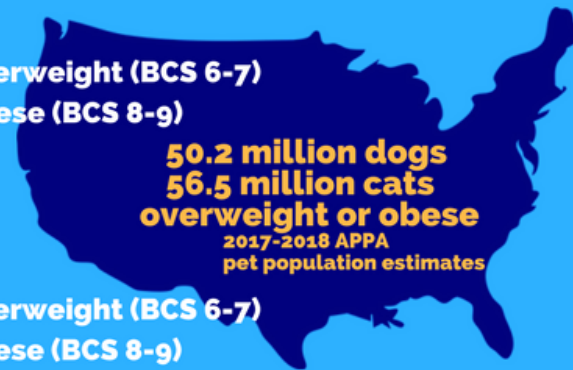
U.S. Pet Obesity



56%

Overweight or Obese

36.4% Overweight (BCS 6-7)
19.6% Obese (BCS 8-9)



60%

26.5% Overweight (BCS 6-7)
33.5% Obese (BCS 8-9)



Have you ever tried to help your pet(s) lose weight?

"YES"
58% Pet Owners
54% Veterinary professionals



Is commercial pet food better or worse than 10 years ago?

"BETTER"
63% Pet Owners
76% Veterinary professionals

Has your veterinarian made a recommendation about the best routine or maintenance diet to feed your pet?

"NO"
48% Pet Owners
"HAD TO ASK"
15% Pet Owners



Do you think organic pet foods are healthier?

"YES"
39% Pet Owners
"I DON'T KNOW"
40% Pet Owners

Source: PetObesityPrevention.org

2017



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U.S. Pet Obesity Survey



95%

Visited their
veterinarian during the
previous year

Pet Owners



50%

Reported their
veterinarian discussed
their pet's ideal or
healthy weight with them



33%

of Pet Owners
give vitamins or
nutritional
supplements



Do you believe
"people food"
is generally
unhealthy for
your pet?

"YES"
65% Pet Owners
67% Veterinary
professionals

Do you think
corn is
healthy
for dogs?

	Pet Owners	Vets
"YES"	5%	50%
"NO"	63%	30%
"I DON'T KNOW"	31%	20%



Do you give your
pet commercial
"store bought"
treats?

"YES"
74% Pet Owners
74% Veterinary
professionals

Do you think
corn is
healthy for
cats?

	Pet Owners	Vets
"YES"	3%	34%
"NO"	63%	46%
"I DON'T KNOW"	34%	20%

Source: PetObesityPrevention.org

2017



Association for
**Pet Obesity
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U.S. Pet Obesity Survey

Where do you receive the best dietary recommendations for your pet? (Check all that apply)

	Veterinarian	Online	Pet Store	Friend	Breeder	Trainer
Pet Owners	57%	52%	15%	10%	7%	6%
Veterinary professionals	78%	32%	9%	10%	4%	5%

 Do you believe that feeding a predominantly canned or moist food will damage your pet's teeth?	Pet Owners		Vets	
	"YES"	35%	31%	"NO"
"NO"	39%	58%	"I DON'T KNOW"	11%
"I DON'T KNOW"	26%	11%		

DOGS: Dry vs Canned Food	
"DRY KIBBLE" 53% Pet Owners 69% Veterinary professionals	"CANNED/MOIST" 17% Pet Owners 12% Veterinary professionals

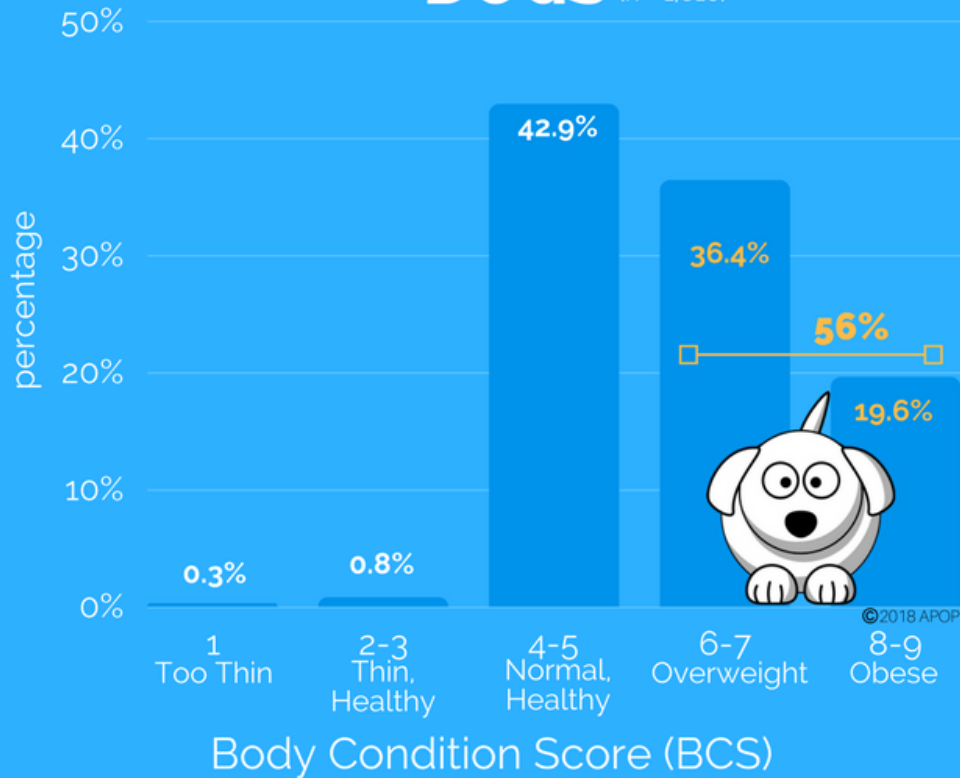
CATS: Dry vs Canned Food	
"DRY KIBBLE" 49% Pet Owners 57% Veterinary professionals	"CANNED/MOIST" 38% Pet Owners 33% Veterinary professionals

Source: PetObesityPrevention.org



2017 U.S. Pet Obesity Survey

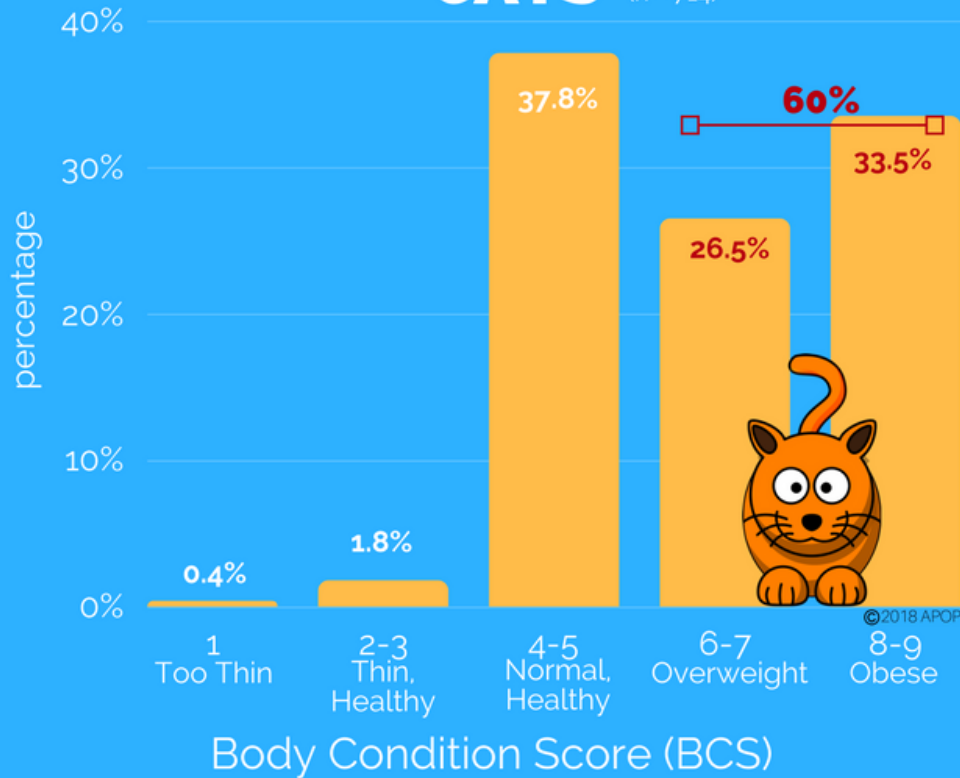
DOGS (n = 1,610)



survey results: PetObesityPrevention.org

2017 U.S. Pet Obesity Survey

CATS (n = 714)



survey results: PetObesityPrevention.org