

## Do you think I'm fat?

As trainers, we consider ourselves all-things-dog “life coaches” for our human clients and their dogs. Beyond just “sit” & “stay” we view it as our responsibility to tread into those sometimes-sensitive waters...say, for example, when your dog is looking kinda chunky.



I'm not a vet, but if I had to guess at the number one health epidemic amongst our pet dogs today, it would be obesity. Improper diet and lack of exercise are the obvious culprits that cause our dogs to become overweight, although hormonal disorders such as hypothyroidism or Cushing's syndrome can cause weight gain as well. Even certain breed types are more prone to obesity, such as Beagles, English Bulldogs, Dachshunds and Pugs. But for most of our dogs, too much food and too little exercise are the main offenders.

In the land of milk and honey and Pup Peroni's, we have become desensitized to fatness in our dogs. A fat dog is the new normal. So what is “ideal”?

### Is Your Dog Too Fat?

 <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: orange;">OBESSE</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Ribs:</b> Difficult to feel under moderate fat cover.</li> <li>✓ <b>Tail Base:</b> Some thickening, bones palable under moderate fat cover.</li> <li>✓ <b>Side View:</b> No abdominal tuck</li> <li>✓ <b>Overhead View:</b> Back is slightly broadened at base</li> </ul>	 <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: orange;">IDEAL</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Ribs:</b> Easily felt with slight fat cover</li> <li>✓ <b>Tail Base:</b> Smooth contour with slight fat cover</li> <li>✓ <b>Side View:</b> Abdominal tuck</li> <li>✓ <b>Overhead View:</b> Well-proportioned waist</li> </ul>
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I always look for a waist. If I'm standing over a dog and I can't see their waist (with a few bulldog exceptions) I think “fat”. Although somewhat simplified, it turns out this is the recognized standard among the veterinary community.

So what's the big deal about a few extra pounds on our pooch?

According to Dr. Jackie Thomas of [Blue Ravine](#)

[Veterinary Hospital](#), “Obesity in dogs can result in various health problems, such as osteoarthritis, cardiopulmonary disease, diabetes, and various cancers. Even moderate obesity

can negatively impact the quality and lifespan of our dogs, not to mention dramatically increase veterinary costs.”

By keeping our dogs at an ideal weight, we are not only saving them pain, discomfort, and reducing the threat of probable illnesses, but we are saving on potential vet bills. I personally use the financial-savings rationale when I spend the extra bucks on quality dog food. I know I feel better when I eat better, and human health professionals say eating “clean” extends our lives and decreases the likelihood of illnesses like diabetes or cancer. So why wouldn’t it be the same for our dogs?

Specialists have written countless articles and books on the emerging research and findings in the study of canine nutrition, and the big takeaway (for me at least) has been “read the label”.

Learn how to choose the best dog food ingredients:

<http://www.petmd.com/dog/slideshows/nutrition-center/determining-best-dog-food-ingredients-label#.UaZXT7WG2So>

Bring your willpower to bear when your pup implores you with those “feed me, feed me” eyes and remember, you’ll thank yourself later. And so will he.