

# Don't Ignore This 'Red Flag' – It Creates a Monstrous Storm Inside Your Pet

Many call it the No. 1 health threat to face pets today, because it creates this 'massive storm' inside your pet's body. It's like a factory churning and blasting poisons through your beloved pet's body and every one of his cells. This is definitely one you'll want to avoid.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Pet guardians in the U.S. seem to have grown bored with the idea their dog or cat may be dangerously overweight
- The real danger of excess weight isn't the fat itself — it's the deadly inflammation created by fat cells in the body. Inflammation increases the risk for many serious diseases, including cancer
- To help an overweight pet slim down, it's important to avoid feeding processed pet food (especially diets marketed as low fat or weight management)
- All dogs and cats, including those carrying too much weight, should be fed a low glycemic, species-appropriate diet consisting of real, whole, and low starch foods, preferably raw, organic, and non-GMO
- Consistent portion control at every meal and regular exercise are also crucial in helping your dog or cat achieve and maintain a healthy weight

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published April 11, 2016.***

Dr. Ernie Ward, a veterinarian and founder of the [Association for Pet Obesity Prevention](#) (APOP), is very alarmed about the epidemic of overweight and obese cats and dogs in the U.S.

And he's not alone. Everyone in the veterinary community shares his concern (though we definitely don't all agree on the underlying cause of the problem, or the best way to solve it).

According to Ward, over the last 20 years, the general perception of obesity has evolved from "fat is funny" to "fat is deadly" to "fat is boring." People are ignoring warnings about obesity even though they know being overweight is unhealthy for both humans and pets.

Ward says people are practicing "optimism bias" in choosing to believe that the debilitating, life-shortening effects of obesity won't happen to them or their beloved animals. It's a way of coping, but it's also a way of avoiding making important lifestyle changes.

# Inflammation Is the No. 1 Health Threat for Pets

To recapture the attention of people who feel "fat is boring," Ward now discusses heavy pets not in terms of their weight, but rather the deadly inflammation the extra weight triggers.

Excess fat causes what Ward calls an "adipokine storm" inside your dog's or cat's body:

*"Adipokines are signal proteins produced by fat tissue," says Ward. "Leptin, adiponectin and interleukin-6 (IL-6) are examples. We know adipokines cause or contribute to hundreds of harmful inflammatory processes throughout the body."*

*Think of every fat cell as a little factory pumping out hundreds of potentially toxic compounds. Multiply that by millions or billions in an obese pet. The real danger of excess fat isn't the fat; it's the inflammation the fat causes."*<sup>1</sup>

It's deeply disturbing to imagine your overweight pet's body is constantly producing millions or billions of toxic compounds, but sadly, that may be the mental image pet owners need to recognize the seriousness of the issue.

Ward firmly believes inflammation is the biggest threat pets face today. Scientific evidence of the damage excessive inflammation causes to the body continues to mount.

Toxic fat combined with a toxic environment (lawn chemicals, PBDEs, vaccines and flea and tick pesticides, to name just a few) plus malnutrition, courtesy of the processed pet food industry, is a 100% guarantee your pet will suffer from at least one degenerative condition in his or her lifetime.

## Did You Know Inflammation Can Lead to Cancer?

Anything that creates or promotes inflammation in the body increases the risk for serious diseases, including:

- Osteoarthritis
- Respiratory disease
- Insulin resistance, Type 2 diabetes
- Cranial cruciate ligament injury
- High blood pressure
- Kidney disease
- Heart disease
- Decreased life expectancy (up to 2.5 years)

Another disease associated with inflammation is cancer, and in fact, research is pointing to cancer as a chronic inflammatory disease. The cancer rate in today's pets is a staggering 1 in 3 cats and 1 in 2 dogs.

Inflammation kills the cells of the body. It also surrounds cells with toxic inflammatory by-products that inhibit the flow of oxygen, nutrients and waste products between cells and blood.

This creates an environment in which abnormal cells proliferate. Bottom line: Preventing inflammation is a crucial step in preventing cancer.

## **Processed Pet Food Is a Root Cause of Pet Obesity**

Most holistic veterinarians, including me, believe processed pet food is by far the biggest contributor to the pet obesity epidemic.

Most commercially available pet diets aren't biologically appropriate for dogs and cats, and are loaded with exactly the types of ingredients that promote weight gain and inflammation in the body.

It's also true that today's pets are overfed and under-exercised, however, the first thing to scrutinize with any overweight dog or cat is the type of food he's eating.

Look for things like the omega-6 to omega-3 ratio in an animal's diet. Food high in omega-6 essential fatty acids and low in omega-3s (which is the case with most processed pet diets) is associated with inflammatory conditions.

Commercial pet food is also typically high in proinflammatory carbohydrates, including processed, high glycemic grains and starchy vegetables like potatoes or lectin-loaded legumes.

If a cat or dog is fed any dry pet food it's a red flag, because all dry pet food contains some form of starch — kibble cannot be produced without it.

## **What Not to Feed an Overweight or Obese Pet**

Since processed pet food is a root cause of overweight and obesity in dogs and cats, the solution is certainly not to feed more of the same. And it's especially important to avoid feeding commercial pet food claiming to be a "low-fat" or "weight reduction" formula for weight loss.

Most processed "low-fat" pet foods are very high in carbohydrates (often labeled "high-fiber"), and typically contain excessive amounts of starches like corn, wheat, rice, potato, or oatmeal, as well as an abnormal amount of nondigestible fiber, or "roughage."

The starches are low in fat, but high in calories; excess calories are stored by your pet's body as fat. The non-nutritive fiber is simply a filler. The theory behind fiber-filled pet food is that it makes cats and dogs feel full. Fiber may make your pet feel temporarily full, but he's not being satiated at the cellular level where it truly counts.

Fiber beyond what would naturally occur in a species-appropriate diet (no more than 8% for dogs and cats) blocks absorption of crucial nutrients into the small intestine. It acts as a barrier, preventing trace minerals, vitamins and antioxidants from being absorbed into your pet's body.

Many "low-fat" or "weight loss" formulas contain as much as 27% fiber, blocking a tremendous amount of critical nutrients! Many owners report their dogs actually act more famished on these "diet" dog foods when fed for a prolonged period of time, and for good reason. Chronic deprivation of nutrients to the cells can result in feelings of constant hunger.

This is because your carnivorous cat or dog isn't getting enough protein and other essential nutrients to adequately sustain his biology. The constant hunger prompts many pets to exhibit pesky begging behaviors, or begin attempting to raid garbage cans or open pantry doors, and becoming obsessive about eating anything and everything on walks.

These annoying behaviors prompt many people to feed more food, assuming their pet is "starving" despite the fact that the animal is too heavy. The end result is a pet that is still fat (and often fatter), but at the same time undernourished, which further exacerbates the potential for degenerative disease.

## What Your Dog or Cat Should Be Fed

Whether your pet is overweight or slim and trim, a healthy, species-appropriate diet for dogs and cats is naturally anti-inflammatory and consists of real, whole foods, preferably raw, organic, and non-GMO. It includes:

- High-quality protein, including muscle meat, organs and bone (protein should make up 75% of a healthy dog's diet, and 88% of a cat's diet)
- Low to moderate levels of animal fat (depending on your pet's activity level)
- High levels of EPA and DHA (omega-3 essential fatty acids)
- A few fresh cut vegetables and a bit of fruit, pureed
- A whole food vitamin/mineral supplement that meets the additional E, zinc, iron, copper, manganese, and vitamin D deficiencies often found in homemade diets OR enough of these hard-to-source foods in whole food forms, daily
- Beneficial additions such as probiotics, digestive enzymes, and super green foods
- High moisture content
- No grains or starches

## Also Critically Important for Overweight Pets — Portion Control and Regular Exercise

Along with balanced, species-appropriate nutrition, it's important when feeding any pet, and especially an overweight or obese animal, to practice portion control on a very consistent basis (as in, at every meal).

One of the biggest problems with pet owners who say "I'm doing everything right, but she's still heavy," is feeding enough calories to sustain her current weight, but not feeding for her ideal weight (it's calorie deficit that prompts the body to burn stored fat).

For most dogs and cats, this means a carefully measured morning and evening meal. And don't forget to factor in any calories from treats, especially any extra bones and chews. Equally important is insuring your dog or cat gets regular exercise. An overweight body slims down by taking in fewer calories and expending more energy.

Daily exercise, including at least 20 minutes of consistent aerobic activity, will help your pet burn fat, increase muscle tone, and maintain the integrity of her musculoskeletal system.

## Sources and References

