



WEIGHTY SCIENCE



'Luna' Barber

■ The science of weight management

We frequently see pets suffering from being overweight in practice, and various studies show that this is consistent with wider society.

While we haven't done the exact maths of drawing together those studies, as a rule of thumb findings show that one in three cats and one in four dogs are overweight. This is a major problem.

When talking to clients we like them to be aware that there has been a change in the science around obesity in pets.

■ How our thinking has changed

Until fairly recently there was a feeling that having excess tissue was benign and inert, acting as an energy store and an insulator for the body.

Actually, as research has continued, we have found that excess fat is metabolically active and has inflammatory qualities – leading to chronic inflammation.

Most of us understand what acute inflammation is: you fall over and hurt something, and your body releases acute inflammation which rushes into where you've been hurt and provides healing qualities, before subsiding.

Chronic inflammation is more like a long-term, low-grade disrupter to the body, almost acting as a consistent fire that the body has to continuously fight over time.

■ The vicious cycle

That then has knock-on effects to the rest of the body, including changing how hormones are released, including the hormone leptin, which tells us how full we are.

What happens is that the body over-releases leptin, until eventually the body stops responding to it – and so the ability to understand when enough food has been consumed is reduced.

Obviously from that point a vicious cycle is started, with more food being consumed, more fat being stored, more inflammation, more leptin being released and the ability to feel full being further reduced.

So quite apart from the illnesses that are directly caused or exacerbated by being overweight, we can see that beneath the bonnet excess tissue is having a profound effect on the way our pets' bodies are functioning.



■ Worried about your pet's weight? Join our **Pet Health Club** and get unlimited free vet visits!

We do things differently, and have been for over 125 years. We're the world's largest employee-owned vet group – something we're very proud of. Our **Pet Health Club** works differently, too.

We offer our members unlimited consults with our vets and nurses throughout the year as standard. We love our patients, and we believe in giving them the right care, in the right way and at the right time. We feel that the best way to do this is to empower you to bring them in to see us, or chat to us via a video consult, whenever you have a concern about their wellbeing.

That means if your pet is having problems with their weight, you can bring them in to see us with no charge, and our lovely team will be happy to help you to work out what the problem is, and how best to solve it..

Sign up via our website, or speak to us in your local branch for more information.

