



**McMASTER & HEAP**  
VETERINARY PRACTICE

# Clios weight loss journey



**Clio before weight loss**

Always a tricky topic to discuss with a committed pet owner as we all try to do the right thing by our special friends. Lets face it we hate letting them down! Plus we love seeing them enjoy their food and we love rewarding them.

Weight management and nutrition should always be a part of every consultation with a pet I believe. There is an overload of nutritional information online, a lot of it incorrect. It amazes me how people with no veterinary or nutritional knowledge at all, claim to know everything about what their dog should eat. I blame Dr Google! Some diets do more harm than good. We have seen puppies as young as 12 weeks of age with Ricketts and severe gastrointestinal disease ( leading to lifelong inflammatory bowel disease) if they are started on raw food diets exclusively. It is now not recommended by vets to feed grain free diets to puppies under 1 year of age due to links to cardiomyopathy ( heart disease).

As veterinarians we need to be able to offer clients clear honest advice before they decide what to feed their pet. There are many great foods out there and some pets do better on one brand over another. It can be a bit of trial and error but you do want a food your pet loves to eat.

As veterinarians and nurses we are always upskilling on the different diets bought out by the food companies. We can make the link between weight gain and disease states, age appropriate diets and try to prescribe a diet in line with the owners nutritional beliefs (if it doesn't harm the pet). Home prepared diets for a particular disease can be formulated through Massey University as well.

There are many great premium diets on the market for the puppy, adult and geriatric pet. What we like to concentrate on are the prescription diets, only sourced through Veterinary clinics, which are an important part of a medical treatment plan for pets with certain diseases (ie kidney disease, diabetes, inflammatory bowel disease, dental disease, joint disease, weight loss diets etc)

Fortunately most pets we see now are not obese. This is part due to better diets sourced and fed, dogs getting more exercise generally, pets cementing themselves in a family thus having more importance and more awareness of obesity in pets. It's not "cute" anymore to be podgy and round. The resurgence of puppy daycare centres and dog walking businesses means dogs are socialising and playing more therefore controlling metabolic rate. Balanced, premium commercial foods are preferred over bones, dog roll and feeding human scraps.

Obesity usually occurs due to gross overfeeding,



**Clio at 30 kg**

excessive treat feeding, feeding high fat diets, and lack of aerobic exercise where dogs especially run, chase, play and fetch. Some breeds are predisposed like the Labrador and Beagle due to their voracious appetites and great nose for finding food.

Medical conditions like Hypothyroidism, Diabetes or Cushings disease also can lead to obesity. This is where the annual check becomes important as your veterinarian should consider the pets weight and body score, explore what foods are fed and recommend blood and urine testing to determine if certain disease states exist. A leaner pet will live a happier, healthier and longer life? Not rocket science.

Clio, a delightful 7.5 year old Chocolate lab presented to me 6 months ago excessively overweight at

40kg. She had lived with elderly owners who fed her household leftovers, Tux and tinned food and she was pretty exclusively an inside dog with very little exercise, although lots of love and pats. About a year ago she had been heavier at 47kg!! At this weight she could no longer get into the car herself, was slow to get up from rest and generally looked sore and stiff in her hips. She had no energy nor desire to play.

She was rehomed within the family, her new owners committed to her weight loss and improving her life. When I first met Clio I checked bloods and urine mainly for thyroid disease and diabetes. She had low normal thyroid levels but I decided to start with the

reduced calorie diet (Hills Science diet Metabolic dry) first. Her intake was 245g per day ( approx 2 cups) with NO treats whatsoever. Her new owners where fanatical, feeding her only what was recommended. Her weight loss success has been excellent, with Clio now weighing 31.60kg. She still could be at risk of becoming hypothyroid in the future, so 6 monthly thyroid tests will continue. She plays with dogs now, can easily walk for 30 minutes and wears a constant smile. She just looks and feels amazing and now has a waist. Even her coat is glossy.

A rule of thumb to determine if your pet is overweight is that they should have a waist when you look down on them and you should be able to easily feel the last 3 ribs. If you are worried your cat or dog may be at risk of becoming obese, book a visit with us today. Your pet will thank us in the long run.

**Dr Michele McMaster**



**Chrysi checking Clio's Bloods**

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