

Use Checklists to Ensure Consistency

Checklists help you deliver the same high-quality care to every patient. When clients are asking questions or you are focusing on handling their pet, it's easy to skip routine steps you'd normally remember. Use this tool to create checklists based on your practice's protocol.

Designing a weight loss plan

<input type="checkbox"/>	Estimate the pet's ideal weight using methods described in the <i>2014 AAHA Weight Management Guidelines for Dogs and Cats</i> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask the client about their pet's current diet, including all food, chew toys, treats (including table scraps) and access to other pets' food.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assess and document the current caloric intake.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate the role of food in the relationship between client and pet.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine the daily caloric goal using methods described in the <i>2014 AAHA Weight Management Guidelines for Dogs and Cats</i> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	Select a diet based on the caloric restriction desired, the degree of obesity and the preferences of the client and pet.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine the daily treat allowance, if applicable. For example, incorporate a treat allowance up to 10% of total calories into the daily caloric goal. It can be challenging to learn the caloric content of various treats, and the calorie count changes frequently. Call the manufacturer to get that information.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate the nutrient profile, particularly protein, in the diet as described in the <i>2014 AAHA Weight Management Guidelines for Dogs and Cats</i> .
<input type="checkbox"/>	Modify diet type and/or amount as necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss with the client the amount of food and treats to give each day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss and decide on an exercise plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enlist the support of all family members to enforce the pet's weight loss plan.

Addressing bumps in the road

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask open-ended questions to determine client's perception of problems.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Show empathy and concern. Acknowledge that weight management can be difficult and you are there to help.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Propose strategies to address client concerns. To develop strategies, use the outline of possible problems and solutions in the <i>2014 AAHA Weight Management Guidelines for Dogs and Cats</i> , and the "What Should I Do If ..?" client handout in this toolkit (page 21 and in the AAHA Download Center. aahanet.org/library/Weight_Management_Download_Center.aspx).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate the current diet and treats, and determine whether modification is necessary.





Suggested follow-up procedure

<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask open-ended questions to encourage clients to share their observations and concerns. Provide positive reinforcement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	At each visit, record weight, muscle condition score (MCS) and body condition score (BCS). Instructions for scoring are included in the <i>2010 AAHA Nutritional Assessment Guidelines for Dogs and Cats</i> and in the AAHA Download Center. aahanet.org/library/Weight_Management_Download_Center.aspx
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider showing the client measurements of girth or abdominal circumference to emphasize losses.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take a picture. Create a chart to monitor and show progress.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Calculate the rate of weight loss using the following formula: <i>The percent rate of weight loss per week = (loss since last visit/weight at last visit × 100/number of weeks since last weight measurement)</i> The desired rate of weight loss is 1–2%/wk for dogs and 0.5–2%/wk for cats. For growing pets < 1 year of age, adjust the plan. See previous comments about feeding for growth (page 6). Depending on the pet's age, the focus may be to slow weight gain instead of causing weight loss.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anticipate a possible slower rate of weight loss in patients with a comorbid condition, such as hyperadrenocorticism or hypothyroidism, until or unless their primary disease is addressed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If MCS decreases, confirm adequate protein intake and evaluate for either too-rapid weight loss or a comorbid condition that intensifies catabolism (e.g., diabetes, renal disease, hyperthyroidism). Adjust intake to reduce the rate of weight loss. If the desired weight loss is achieved, congratulate the client and identify the next target weight.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If weight loss is greater than the desired rate, increase calories by 10% and monitor weight response.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Modify diet type and/or amount as necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss with the client the amount of food and treats to give each day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discuss and decide on an exercise plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enlist the support of all family members to enforce the pet's weight loss plan.

If weight loss is less than the desired rate

<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate compliance or other influences that may have tempered results and suggest alternatives.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If compliance is verified and there is no evidence of risk, reduce calories by 10–20% [to a minimum of 60% of Resting Energy Requirement (RER) for ideal weight] and/or change activity recommendations and identify the next benchmark.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consult with or refer to a board-certified veterinary nutritionist for clients with pets requiring < 60% RER to achieve weight loss.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule the next weigh-in or telephone follow-up.