

America's porky pets face health woes, too, FDA says

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(HealthDay)—America's weight problem extends to its pets, with a

majority of cats and dogs dangerously overweight, a federal government veterinarian warns.

"Just as obesity has become a serious problem in people, it's also a growing problem in pets, one that can seriously harm your pet's health," said Dr. Carmela Stamper, of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Veterinary Medicine.

About 58 percent of cats and 54 percent of dogs in the United States are [overweight](#), according to a 2015 survey by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention.

"The diseases we see in our overweight pets are strikingly similar to those seen in [overweight people](#)," Stamper said in an FDA news release. These include life-shortening conditions such as type 2 diabetes, [high blood pressure](#), osteoarthritis, heart and respiratory disease, and kidney problems, she noted.

So, what exactly signals obesity for Fido or Kitty?

In general, 20 percent over ideal body weight is obese. And Stamper said age, breed, body type and metabolism can help tip the scales.

"In dogs, some breeds seem more inclined toward obesity than others," Stamper said. Labs, beagles and long, low dogs such as dachshunds and basset hounds are some examples.

Although America's cats are also fattening up overall, veterinarians say no specific feline breed is prone to pudginess.

Stamper outlined some ways to determine if your pet is at a healthy weight. Look at your pet from above to see if it has a definite waist.

"If not, and her back is broad and flat like a footstool, she is likely overweight," Stamper said.

Run your hands along your pet's side. Can you easily feel the ribs, or do you have to push hard to feel them? Check your pet's abdomen/stomach. If you can easily grab a handful of fat, that's a sign your pet is overweight.

If you're concerned about your pet's weight, or want to know how to keep your pet at a [healthy weight](#), talk to your veterinarian, Stamper said.

More information: The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention has more on [pets and weight](#).

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