



PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY AND ASSOCIATED RISK FACTORS IN DOGS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Overweight and obesity are major health problems in dogs, since they lead to a lower life expectancy and a decreased quality of life. They contribute to the development of diseases such as osteoarthritis and diabetes mellitus type II. To prevent obesity, owners need to be restrained from overfeeding their dogs. It is therefore necessary for owners to recognize when their dogs are becoming overweight. Furthermore, several risk factors are known to predispose for developing obesity, such as castration and aging.

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This cross-sectional study was performed to investigate the prevalence of overweight and obesity in a non-randomized group of dogs in the Netherlands. Risk factors for becoming overweight and obese were analyzed, with the use of a questionnaire. The body condition score (BCS) on a 9-point scale was used by the researcher to determine the body condition of the dogs. Owners were asked to do the same to study their own perception of their dog's body condition, without knowing the previous assigned BCS.

A total of 290 dogs was examined: 40.0% exceeded ideal weight (BCS \geq 6), with 12.4% being obese (BCS \geq 7). Risk factors associated with overweight and obesity were older age, with the highest risk in dogs aged 11 or above, the presence of diseases that increase body weight or decrease activity levels and underestimation of the dog's body condition by the owner. When investigating the owner's perception of their dog, 44.0% of the owners underestimated their dog's BCS. This shows the necessity to educate dog owners on canine obesity and to raise awareness of the effects on animal health and welfare.