

**Body Condition Assessment**

THE PURINA BODY CONDITION SYSTEM

The Purina 9-Point Body Condition System, available for both dogs and cats, is an easy and practical tool that can be used by both health care professionals and owners to regularly monitor a pet for excess or inadequate body fat.



It is often used in the prevention and management of obesity, which affects health and longevity in pets. However, it is also useful to assess pets that are underweight. The Purina Body Condition System has been adopted by the World Small Animal Veterinary Association and is the most widely used body condition system for small animal veterinarians.

Key Messages

- Although regularly monitoring body weight is good practice, there is a lot of variation between breeds, and it is difficult to know what an ideal weight is, especially with mixed breeds. That is where body condition scoring can make things easier.
 - Ideal Body Condition Score is defined as:
 - Cats = 5
 - Dogs = 4 to 5
 - However, in clinical practice, there may be exceptions. There are certain breeds, e.g., some Orientals, where 4 may be an ideal Body Condition Score in cats. A Body Condition Score of 6 may be considered ideal in older cats.
 - Each Body Condition Score unit above 5 is associated with a 10 to 15% increase in body weight.

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Key Messages (continued)

- Excessive body fat is associated with an increased risk of chronic health issues and ultimately affects longevity. The Body Condition Score assesses fat cover, by a visual and hands-on evaluation and provides a better assessment of a pet's overall health than body weight.
 - Ideal body condition is defined as a visible waist (when viewed from above) and tummy tuck (side profile) and easily palpated ribs.
 - Purina research has shown that maintaining a lean body condition from puppyhood can extend a dog's healthy life by up to 15%.
 - Obese cats are at an increased risk of a shortened life span and diseases including diabetes mellitus and lower urinary tract diseases.
- The Body Condition Score is also useful to assess pets that are underweight, which is a particular concern with senior cats, who once they reach 10-12 years of age are prone to being underweight, and in animal welfare situations.

Additional Resources

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- Laflamme, D. P. (1997). Development and validation of a body condition score system for dogs. *Canine Practice*, 22(4), 10–15.
- German, A. J. (2006). The growing problem of obesity in dogs and cats. *Journal of Nutrition*, 136, 1940S–1946S. doi: 10.1093/jn/136.7.1940S
- Teng, K. T., McGreevy, P. D., Toribio, J.-A. L. M. L., Raubenheimer, D., Kendall, K., & Dhand, N. K. (2018). Strong associations of nine-point body condition scoring with survival and lifespan in cats. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*, 20(12), 1110–1118. doi: 10.1177/1098612X17752198

The Purina Institute aims to help put nutrition at the forefront of pet health discussions by providing user-friendly, science-based information that helps pets live longer, healthier lives.