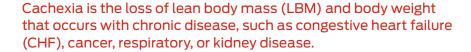


Abnormal Body Condition

CACHEXIA IN DOGS AND CATS





This condition is important to identify and address because it is associated with diminished immune function, increased morbidity, and shorter life spans.¹⁻³

The disease-associated loss of LBM and weight is the result of complex metabolic changes and systemic effects from chronic inflammation of disease.⁴ While nutrition cannot "cure" cachexia, it can help address some of these metabolic changes, as well as the specific needs linked with the underlying disease.¹

Key Messages

- Routine nutritional assessments that include body weight, body condition, and muscle condition scoring, are key to early identification of LBM loss.¹
 - Tracking only body weight may miss the loss of lean body mass that may be masked by increased body fat or fluid gain.⁵
- Decreased protein and calorie intake often coincides with, and worsens, cachexia.
 - Anorexia is present in 34–84% of dogs and cats with heart disease, and may be secondary to fatigue, dyspnea, medication, altered food preferences, and/or altered neural control of appetite in cachexia. 6-9
 - Strategies include feeding meals more frequently, in varied locations, and using flavor enhancers (avoid high sodium levels for pets with heart failure and avoid high phosphorus for pets with kidney disease).¹
 - Review homemade diets with a board-certified veterinary nutritionist to ensure the diet is nutritionally balanced and complete, and provides adequate calories and protein for the individual patient.¹
 - Guidelines suggest about 2.55 gram of protein/kg body weight for healthy adult dogs and about 5 grams/kg body weight in healthy adult cats while also assuring adequate calorie intake.¹º
 - More protein may be beneficial—only restrict protein if it is medically essential.
 - Review all dietary supplements as they may unintentionally contribute to anorexia through adverse interactions with other medications.¹

(continued on next page)



Key Messages (continued)

- Fish oil supplementation, high in the long-chain omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, can decrease inflammatory cytokine production and improve food intake.¹¹
 - Flax seed oil or other plant-based omega-3 fatty acids are ineffective sources of EPA and DHA in dogs and cats.¹²
- There is an "obesity paradox" with CHF cachexia in dogs and cats (and people), and renal cachexia in dogs: Higher body weights are linked with longer survival times.
 - This emphasizes the importance of avoiding unintended weight and muscle loss.¹³⁻¹⁶

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