



COVID KILOS AN ISSUE FOR CATS TOO

When a friendly ginger cat arrived at The Cat Protection Society in early 2021, he was carrying a few excess kilos. In fact, he was morbidly obese.

He tipped the scales at 8.84 kilos and was too large to adopt out, so had to embark on a 'boot camp' style exercise regime, in order to slim down. This was no easy feat for a 16 year old tabby, especially since the average weight for a cat is between 2.5 – 4.5 kilos!

With twice daily shelter walks to help shed his excess weight, Simba did achieve his fitness goals and was ready to be adopted into his forever home.

Melanie and Russell Moore discovered Simba online, and Melanie arranged to meet him at the Shelter.

"It was love at first sight when I met Simba. He is such an affectionate and happy cat," said Melanie.

Melanie and Russell couldn't have been more besotted with their new furry friend, but they needed to keep his exercise regime in place to ensure he didn't pile on the kilos once again.

"When I met Simba his training had worked as his weight was down to 7.9 kilos. He now weighs 7.1 kilos and remains on a strict diet but is still obsessed with food. He wails each morning at around 3am to 4am for breakfast!"

With the Cat Protection Society of Victoria seeing an increase in overweight cats coming into the clinic since the beginning of the year due to Covid, many cat owners are wondering how to help their cats shed those excess kilos, just as Simba did.

"Like humans who have gained those extra 'Covid kilos', so too have a number of cats," says the Society's Practice Manager, Emilea "Owners have spent so much more time at home with their cats due to lockdowns and Covid work from home restrictions, and have therefore been feeding them far more than required. Some owners feel like they need to feed their cat every time it meows, but this can lead to overfeeding and weight gain," she says.

Overweight cats face the same health concerns that people can face, including joint pain, spinal problems, diabetes, and high cholesterol to name a few. Depending on how overweight your pet becomes, it can also start to affect their hearts and breathing- the more weight that they have to carry around, the harder their hearts and lungs have to work.

Emilea says that it's sometimes tricky however to tell if your cat is in fact overweight.

"Your cat should have a waist, think hour-glass figure, you should be able to feel ribs when you slightly push on the ribcage. However, some cats are built differently and they need a bit of extra weight on them. We have all been guilty of "over-loving" our cats, so if you're concerned that your cat is overweight, make an appointment to see the vet or vet nurse, to get a weigh in."

If your cat is carrying a few excess kilos, there are a number of ways you can help them to shed those unwanted kilos, says Emilea.

- Diet and exercise is key for your cats' weight loss journey. There are several diets that are designed to help your cat lose weight, which are incredibly easy to stick to, so ask your vet for some handy tips.





- TOYS TOYS TOYS!! Get your cat moving and playing. This is where the fun starts, because most cats love to play and you can get creative with the games that you play. Any toys that move are usually popular with our furry feline friends, such as dancing feather wands, window toys, or any toy that is on a stick.
- Regular exercise for any cat is important. Unlike dogs, most cats will not walk on a lead, so we as pet parents need to get creative when it comes to exercise routines! Younger cats are much easier to get moving once you find a toy that they really love. A Scratching post is also a great way to get them moving, as you can use the toys to get your cat to jump to different levels of the post.
- Older cats are slightly harder as they are in their “mature years” and would much rather spend the day lounging. If they don’t play with toys any more, move their food around the house. Instead of having their full breakfast in one spot, place half in one room, and the other half in a second room. They will still be doing gentle exercise but will be able to do it in their time.

Like Simba, who did twice daily walks to shed his excess kilos, it’s extremely important that cats lose weight slowly, as opposed to going on a ‘crash diet’, which can be dangerous to their health. With the guidance of your vet, this can normally be achieved by feeding your cat the correct portion sizes and increasing their level of physical activity.

Head Vet at the Society, Dr Peta Keown says that a very important part of getting your cat to loose weight is managing their diet.

“There is a feeding guide on dry food that will tell you how much your cat will need to eat. This is PER DAY and not PER MEAL. This amount is always less than what we think as pet

parents. Vet clinics use high quality veterinary diets that are completely balanced. The amount that is recommended on the bag of food is the correct amount to help your cat lose weight correctly.”

“Many owners tell me that their cat always seems hungry and my response is to trick them! We can use food tricks, that can help “relieve” those hungry meows. For example, measure out your cats daily food intake and store it in a air tight container. Give them a 1/3 for breakfast, a small amount for lunch and the rest for dinner. If your cat is used to having treats, just take a couple of biscuits out of their daily portion and use those instead.”

Another tip according to Dr Keown is to use slow feeder toys and mats, which are designed to make your cat work for their food. They not only provide their food requirements, but the cat has to exercise and work to get it!

If you’re worried that your cat has put on weight suddenly, or is having trouble shedding those excess kilos, it’s always best to consult your vet.

“It’s important for your vet to ensure that there are no underlying illnesses that have caused your pet to gain that extra weight. We also need to make sure that we help our cats lose their extra weight in a healthy and safe way and not by putting them on a crash diet. Your vet team can work with you to design a weight loss plan that will help your cat lose the weight, but also ensure that they hit their goal weight,” says Dr Keown.

If you’re concerned that your cat might be overweight and you’d like to help them shed their covid kilos so they can be their healthiest self, you can book in a free nursing consult at The Cat Protection Society’s cat-friendly, cat-only Veterinary Clinic this June.