



Developing and Evaluating a Health Pack to Support Dog Owners to Manage the Weight of their Companion Animals

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Between 25 and 44% of dogs in developed countries are obese

Owners play a key role in prevention of obesity and managing weight – hence the need for behavioural science



For more information:
<https://www.vettimes.co.uk/purina-obesity-ebook/> (Free download)

Development of a Health Pack

The pack included:

- **Information** on the importance of weight management
- Information on **how to weigh** and **assess body condition score (BCS)**
- A journal to **track progress**
- **Infographic** illustrating the calorific value of treats
- **Cards** to help owners manage difficult situations
- A **collar tag** for the dog



The pack was informed by previous research, behaviour change theory (e.g., the COM-B model, Michie, 2011), interviews with 12 veterinary professionals to identify challenges, and workshops with 28 dog owners who provided feedback on the initial ideas.

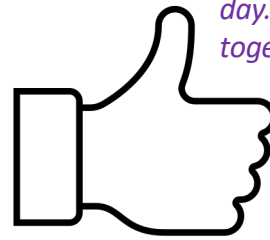
Evaluating the Health pack

The acceptability of the materials and potential outcomes were evaluated in a pre-registered pilot trial (<https://osf.io/e65wj>) with a sample of 78 dog owners who were posted the pack. 49 of these owners (63%) responded to a follow-up survey an average of 85 days (12 weeks) later.

Key results

- 88% of the sample who responded to the follow-up survey were willing to weigh their dog.
- Owners typically found the pack acceptable, as assessed via the seven components of acceptability delineated by Sekohn et al. (2017).
- Preliminary evidence that many owners changed their behaviour (80% of those who responded)
- Body weight and BCS of dogs was lower at follow-up (Ms = 17.06kg and 5.20 for weight and BCS respectively) than at baseline (Ms = 17.44kg and 5.70, respectively)

“I’m more mindful how many little bits of food she receives throughout the day. We also prefer to play together now.”



“Since using the pack it became more apparent that he needs to be weighed more regularly.”

Discussion/Conclusion

The findings illustrate the potential of a health pack for supporting dog owners and provide the basis for a larger RCT to formally evaluate effectiveness. It would also be useful to think about how the pack might be used – independently by owners? Following in-person consultations or alongside nurse-led obesity clinics?

References

- Michie, S., van Stralen, M.M. and West, R. (2011). The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions. *Implementation Sci.* 6, 42. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42>
- Sekohn, M., Cartwright, M. and Francis, J.J. (2017). Acceptability of healthcare interventions: an overview of reviews and development of a theoretical framework. *BMC Health Serv. Res.* 17, 88. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-017-2031-8>

