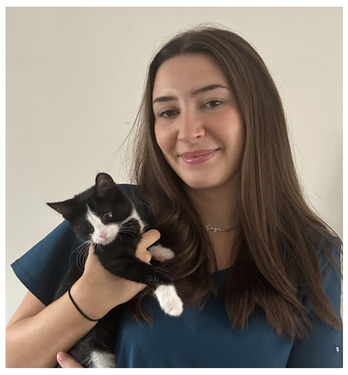


UNDERSTANDING OWNER PERCEPTIONS OF CANINE OBESITY

Knowledge, Awareness and Factors Influencing Weight Status in Dogs

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Background Information

🐕 A Growing Welfare Challenge

Canine obesity affects >40% of dogs globally and represents a significant companion-animal welfare concern. (1)

⚠️ Why Does It Matter?

Obesity can contribute to (2):

Orthopaedic disease → Endocrine disorders → Cardiovascular compromise → Reduced mobility → Shortened lifespan

👁️ The Challenge for Owners

Many owners **struggle to accurately assess their dog's body condition**, creating barriers to the **early recognition, prevention and management of obesity.** (3)

Research Aims

1. To determine an owner's knowledge of canine obesity
2. To identify an owner's understanding of the severity of canine obesity
3. To identify, compare and contrast the main contributing factors associated with canine obesity

The Study

1. **Recruited through social media channels** — Participants were recruited via social media channels.
2. **Distributed online** — The survey was distributed online.
3. **Responses collected and screened** — Responses were collected and screened for eligibility.
4. **Pilot study completed** — A pilot study was completed.
5. **147 Valid Responses** — 147 valid responses were included in the final analysis.

Analysis

Analysed with descriptive statistics and chi square tests. & Qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis.

Results

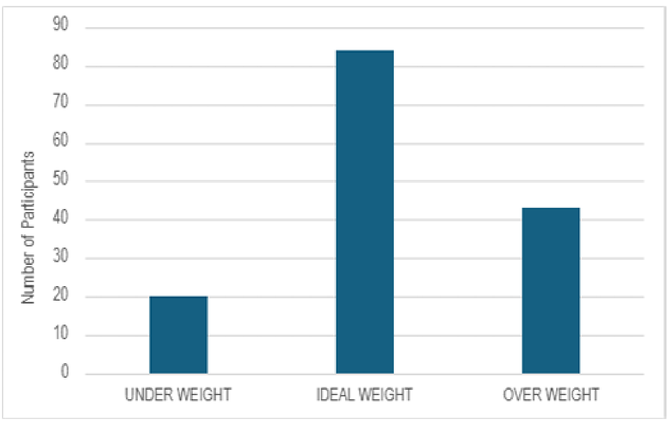


Figure 1 – Classification of Body Conditions for Canine Participants

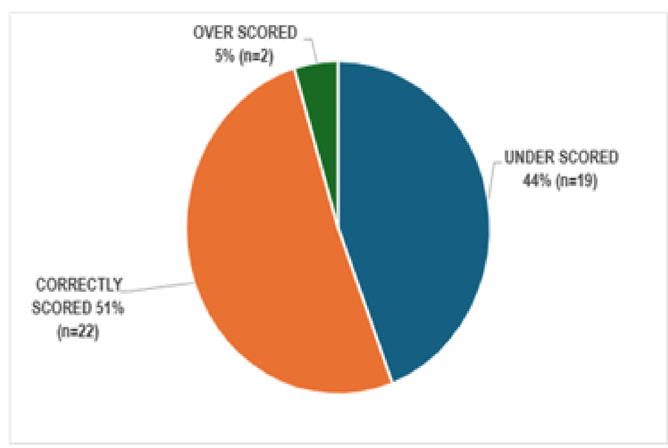


Figure 2 – BCS Validity for Overweight/Obese Canines

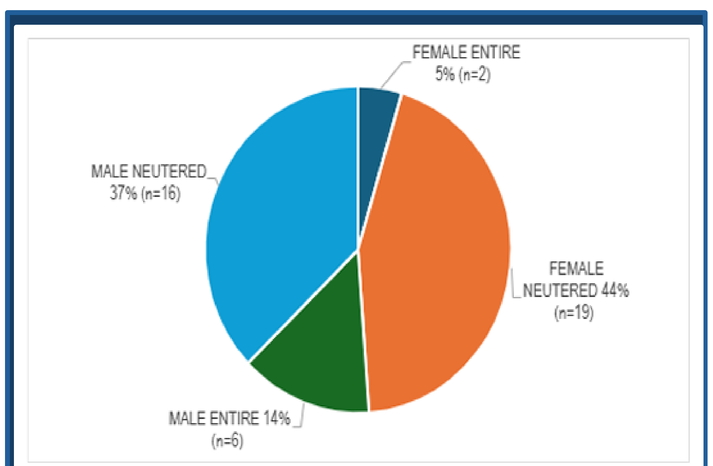


Figure 3 – Comparison of Gender and Neuter Status with Canine Body Condition Classification

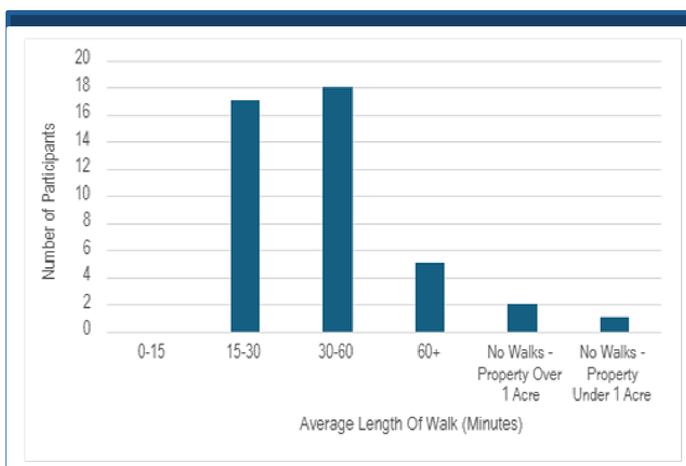


Figure 4 – BCS Validity for Overweight/Obese Canines

Key Findings

- ❑ 41.5% of dogs were overweight or obese (Figure 1)
- ❑ 51% of overweight dogs were misclassified as ideal (Figure 2). Owners frequently underestimated their dog's body condition
- ❑ 79% of all owners accurately assessed their dogs BCS, compared with just 51% among owners of overweight dogs, indicating low validity of owner-reported BCS in this group.

Factors Associated With Obesity

- ❑ Neuter Status: 48% of neutered dogs were overweight, compared with 29% of intact dogs (Figure 3)
- ❑ Exercise Duration: 62% of overweight dogs were walked for <30 minutes daily, compared with 28% of ideal-weight dogs (Figure 4)

Significant Associations

Overweight/obesity was significantly associated with:

- ❑ Breed (p = 0.001)
- ❑ Area of Residence (p = 0.03)
- ❑ Daily Walk Duration (p = 0.04)

No Significant Association

No significant associations were identified with:

- ❑ Owner BMI (however, a trend was observed where overweight owners were more likely to have overweight dogs)
- ❑ Education Level
- ❑ Diet Type
- ❑ Treat Frequency

Discussion

- Owner misperception of canine body condition remains common, with overweight dogs frequently perceived as being of ideal weight.
- Awareness of obesity-related health risks appears incomplete, particularly for health consequences may be less visible to owners.
- Comparison of owner-reported BCS with calculated body condition classification demonstrated frequent under-scoring of overweight dogs, highlighting the limitations of subjective owner assessment.
- These findings support the need for targeted owner education within veterinary practice, with veterinary teams playing an important role in obesity prevention and management.
- Further research using objective body condition assessment methods is warranted to strengthen the evidence base.
- Improving owner recognition of canine obesity may be an important step towards earlier intervention, prevention and improved canine welfare.

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2. Gomes, A.G.C., Morais,K.M.A.S.C., Lima, N.D.S., Umigi, R.T., Paiva, J.T. and Fagundes, G.M. (2025)'Canine Obesity: Contributing Factors and Body Condition Evaluation', Pets,2(22). Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/pets2020022
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