

Exercise and Diet for Weight Loss

Obesity can cause or complicate many other conditions, such as arthritis.

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Some dogs will need vitamin, mineral and fatty-acid supplements to maintain coat quality and appearance while eating diet foods, so check with your veterinarian.

Try feeding two or three small meals each day, rather than one large meal; this may help reduce begging. Another trick is measuring the food allotment for the day, then giving half for breakfast, with the rest fed throughout the day in place of treats and rewards. Be sure you accurately measure the amount.

Increasing the exercise level is also simple if you can find the time. Gradually increase the level and duration of activity as Ramsey's exercise tolerance allows. Slow walking is probably not adequate for most dogs. Brisk walking, jogging and running off-lead (in a safe place) are best. Dog-friendly treadmills have recently become available. Swimming is an excellent alternative, especially for arthritic and lame dogs. Encourage exercise whenever Ramsey begs and seeks attention; assume he wants activity, not food.

You may need to address arthritis and pain to help Ramsey comfortably attain a reasonable level of exercise. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin and carprofen and other arthritis treatments can be helpful. Check with your veterinarian about the need for these medications and proper dosages. Many overweight lame dogs magically lose their pain and need for medications once they approach a weight more suitable for their frame size.