

## How Thin Is Too Thin For a Dog?

**Weight loss in your dog could be caused by a number of diseases.**

*Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. We have a Shar-Pei/pitbull mix and she seems really small. She is almost 2 years old and eats really well, but for some reason she doesn't gain any weight. Any ideas?

A. Some dogs will reach a maximum body weight and stay there regardless of how much they eat. (Wouldn't it be great if we could all have that kind of metabolism?) The best way to assess a dog's overall body size and shape is by using a body condition score, in which the dog is given a score between 1 to 10. A score of 10 is for an obese dog with a sausage-like body shape that has absolutely no indentation in front of the hips and no visible ribs. A score of 1 is for an emaciated dog with no muscle on the hips, and ribs that are protruding. The ideal score, 5, is for a dog that has an hourglass shape when viewed from above, and the ribs are barely visible. Several diseases can cause unexplained weight loss or inability to thrive. These include pancreatic insufficiency (the pancreas is not digesting food), protein-losing enteropathy (the intestines allow protein to leak back in to be passed out in the stool), kidney diseases (proteins and glucose leak into the urine), heart disease and cancer. A few other possible diseases could be on the list, but if your dog is just small, but well proportioned, I wouldn't worry. Otherwise, get her into the vet.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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