

Dogs Shed Pounds in Weight-Loss Contest

10 overweight dogs changed their diets and exercised regularly as part of a weight-loss contest in Florida.

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A Florida veterinarian recently organized a weight loss competition called “Big Dog/Big Loser” to help overweight dogs lose some extra pounds.

The contest, which ran from Jan. 18 to April 12, was based on the reality television series “The Biggest Loser,” which offered severely overweight participants the opportunity to undergo a radical physical makeover without any kind of surgery.

Anne Chauvet, a veterinary neurologist at Veterinary Neuro Services and Pet Rehab & Performance Center in Sarasota, Fla., enrolled 10 obese dogs from Sarasota and Manatee counties for the 12-week competition. Each dog entered had to be a minimum of 40 percent overweight. The winner was the dog that lost the most weight and inches in proportion to its breed.

The winner was a 10-year-old Schnauzer-Poodle mix named Winnie. She lost 7 pounds, along with 4 inches from her chest and 7 inches from her waist. Winnie’s owners are Bonnie and Larry Rauch of Greenfield Plantation.

Winnie also experienced a significant reduction in her triglycerides, according to Karissa Mayer, a certified veterinary technician at VNS. Schnauzers are prone to idiopathic hypertriglyceridemia, she said. Veterinarians generally prescribe a high-fiber diet with added omega-3s to treat it. Winnie was on a high-fiber prescription diet.

Once Winnie was accepted into the contest, she was switched to a calorie-controlled, high-protein diet. She was started on Platinum Performance Canine Wellness Formula, which was provided by Platinum Performance Inc., co-sponsor of the event. Winnie also began an exercise program.

“Her triglycerides went from a high count of 827 at the start to 106 at the finish,” Mayer said.

A Husky named Tinmook took second place, and third went to Dudley, a Beagle.

The dogs competed to achieve the biggest weight and size loss by reducing the amount of food they ate, supplementing with Platinum Performance Canine Wellness Formula, and exercising three times a week on an underwater treadmill, in addition to daily walks.

They also participated in obedience classes, which helped them burn calories and increase muscle mass. Their human companions attended lectures on everything from basic canine behavior and nutrition to obesity and advanced nutrition, including the benefits of therapeutic and dietary supplements for dogs.

A national version of the canine “Big Dog/Big Loser” contest is in the works.