

Overweight Dog and Cat Win 'PetFit Challenge'

The nationwide contest encouraged healthy weight loss for overweight dogs and cats.

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Banfield, The Pet Hospital has announced the winners of its first-ever "Pet Fit Challenge" contest, and a dog from Georgia and a cat from Kansas and tipped back the scales to earn the top prize.

The hospital organized the contest to combat the growing problem of overweight pets. Banfield teamed up with Hill's Pet Nutrition to conduct the contest, and participating pets' owners received medical guidance from veterinarians for proper feeding and exercise routines.

"Pet obesity is a very serious, yet common health threat to millions of pets across America," said Karen Johnson, DVM, and Banfield vice president and client advocate. "Fortunately, weight issues are usually treatable through diet and exercise, which our PetFit winners' weight-loss achievement proves. We hope the winners will inspire pet owners everywhere to keep their pets at a healthy body weight."

Tyson, a 7-year-old Labrador Retriever mix, won in the dog category by dropping 20 pounds. "I feel like I have prolonged our time together by improving his health," says Sarah Collins, Tyson's owner. "Tyson acts like a puppy again."

Boris conquered the cat division; he lost 15% of his body weight, or 3.5 pounds. Boris' family reports that since his weight loss, his health has improved and he's much more active.

A team of Banfield medical advisors chose the winners, and the decision was based on several factors such as gradual, safe weight loss, following veterinarian advice, an essay about the pets' progress, as well as before and after photos. Pets had six months to lose get in shape.

"At the beginning of the program, in late 2006, we examined our data at Banfield and found that more than 67 percent of dogs and cats at Banfield were noted as heavy in the past two years," Johnson added. The organization handed out 15,000 PetFit kits nationwide to owners who wanted to participate in the contest.

As a reward for their safe and healthy weight loss, Tyson and Boris will each receive a new refrigerator filled with Hill's pet food and a one-year Banfield Optimum Wellness Plan.