

Feed Your Collie Right

Customized nutrition is the foundation for your dog's health.

Karla S. Rugh, D.V.M., Ph.D

More Than Enough Obesity is the most common canine nutrition-related health problem. It can increase your Collies chances of developing diabetes, liver disease and pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas). It can also aggravate pre-existing joint problems, such as hip dysplasia. Excessive weight can overwork your Collies heart and hinder breathing, plus exercise is more difficult for obese dogs, which increases the likelihood of continued weight problems.

How can you tell if your Collie is too fat? When viewed from above, your four-footed companion should have a waist--an indentation in the flank area. If a heavy coat hinders your assessment, run your hands over your Collies body: You should be able to easily feel the waist and ribs (a little padding is okay).

According to the Collie breed standard, males should weigh 60 to 75 pounds and females should weigh 50 to 65 pounds. Not every Collie conforms to the standard, however, so your Collies ideal weight may be more or less than the stated range. Preventing a weight problem is lots easier than treating one. Don't free-feed your Collie (allowing it to eat as much as it wants whenever it chooses). Instead, follow the food manufacturers recommendation, then adjust the amount depending on your dogs response. Limit between-meal treats--veggies are good low-calorie choices. Make sure your Collie gets plenty of exercise. Vigorous exercise is preferable, but even walking will help maintain a trim profile.

If your Collie is just a little pudgy, cutting back on its food, eliminating treats and increasing its daily exercise may be all it takes to slim it down. If your Collie is obese, however, you'll need to consult your veterinarian about a weight-loss plan, which should include a complete check-up, as well as dietary and exercise recommendations. Your veterinarian may recommend a prescription or therapeutic food that's specifically designed for weight loss. Non-prescription light or reduced calorie foods may not work as well, although they're often useful for maintaining weight loss.

Emergency: 3-Steps to a Bloat-Free Dog Bloat--also called gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV)--is a disorder that most commonly occurs in large, deep-chested dogs. The disorder is characterized by gastric dilatation (excessive accumulation of gas in the stomach) and volvulus (twisting of the stomach), which can occur if the swelling is not relieved. The most prominent sign of bloat is a severely distended abdomen that sounds like a drum when tapped. The dog is restless and uncomfortable, and may vomit without bringing anything up. A true veterinary emergency, bloat worsens rapidly, leading to shock and death if untreated.

Why bloat occurs in some dogs and not in others isn't completely understood. Conformation plays a role, but some breeds may be genetically predisposed to bloat as well. Other factors include: rapid consumption of large meals, especially dry or soy-based foods; drinking large amounts of water after eating; and exercising strenuously after eating.