

Innovation in food and wearables tackles pet obesity epidemic

By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

23 Aug 2018

Obesity is not only a widespread problem for humans, but that 'puppy fat' your now adult pet hasn't quite shed may be cause for concern.



©Fimam Saphankaew via [123RF](#)

According to Hill's Pet Nutrition, South African vets say that more than 50% of pets they treat are overweight or obese, and 9 out of 10 pet parents of overweight pets mistakenly identify their pet's weight as normal. This is widely referred to as the 'Fat Gap', and is a key factor in the pet obesity epidemic.

Pet obesity is a serious health risk, but 92% of pet parents don't see it that way. An overweight animal is at a higher risk of disease and their life expectancy decreases by up to two-and-a-half-years.

Pet obesity has been linked to more than 20 ailments, including arthritis, urinary conditions, skin problems, heart disease and cancer.

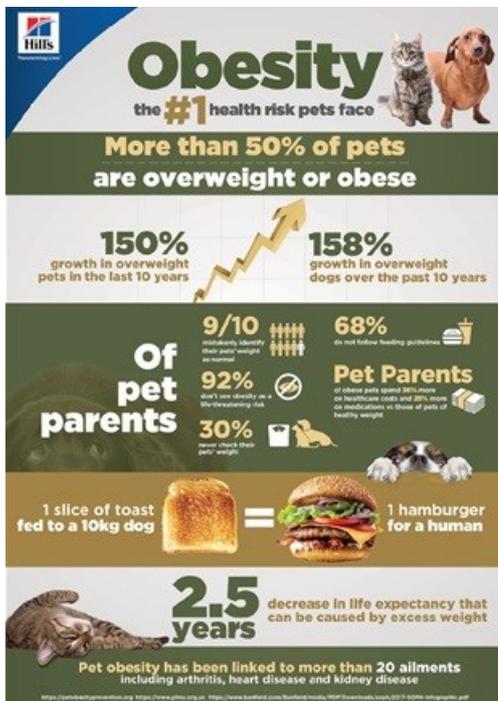
Pet owners' behaviour often plays a major role in their animals being overweight. The tendency to humanise our pets extends beyond dressing them in clothing to feeding them human foods like cheese, ice-cream and biltong.

"Treating our loved ones with food is a way we can show them how much we love them. It's part of our culture and tradition," says Carla Bath, marketing manager at Hill's Pet Nutrition South Africa.

"But that shared stick of dry wows reflects the emotional part that makes obesity a complex condition that's tough to beat."

Nutrigenomics-based nutrition

While many concerned pet owners may resort to cutting portion sizes or restricting calories to curb weight gain, feeding a pet the correct food is what should be focused on. In addition to managing pets' weight, the right food also ensures that their daily nutritional needs are met sufficiently.



Some pet food brands have been incorporating the science of nutrigenomics to create foods specifically designed to help overweight animals maintain a healthy body weight.

Nutrigenomics (shorthand for nutritional genomics) involves the study of how nutrients found in food can influence gene expression. While nutrigenomics is also applicable to the human diet, Bath says that the technology is more advanced – and most effective – when it comes to pet nutrition simply because humans are in control of what their pets consume.

These advances are helping veterinary nutritionists select pet food ingredients that affect positive changes in a pet's body chemistry, resulting in better health. What this means is that a food like Hill's Prescription Diet Metabolic – which is the company's nutrigenomic-based brand – can essentially ignite the metabolism of an overweight pet to work like that of a lean pet.

[click to enlarge](#)



Is pet 'parenting' driving SA industry growth?

Insight Survey 11 Jun 2018



Wearable tech

While GPS trackers remain the most used pet wearable globally, rising concern regarding obesity among dogs and cats has compelled pet owners to adopt continuous health monitoring. A recent study by Fact.MR reveals that demand for activity monitors is likely to expand at “a meteoric pace” through 2028.

According to the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, the rate of obesity among pets has increased in the past few years. Thus, medical diagnosis and treatment have gained increasing importance in the wearables market, which according to the Fact.MR report, is likely to exhibit a strong 7.6% value CAGR throughout 2018-2028.

"Medical diagnosis and treatment have gained alarming importance, underpinned by a significant rise in pet health issues," states the study. "Obesity being one of the major factors reducing life expectancy by up to 3 years, it has become essential to use pet wearables such as activity monitors to facilitate preventive health maintenance."

Pet Obesity Month

October is Pet Obesity Month in South Africa. Pet owners can visit www.PetSlimmer.co.za to find vets who are offering free weight checks during the month, to help ensure their furry friends are in tip-top shape. Vets will assess their weight and condition and can, if required, make recommendations that will help to get animals back to a healthy weight.

The programme combines Hill's clinically-proven weight loss food with regular weigh-ins and expert advice, and has proven to be a successful formula for thousands of cats and dogs. Many local vets run the Hill's Pet Slimmer Programme all year around.

ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

Managing editor and retail editor at Bizcommunity.com Cape Town apologist. Dog mom. Get in touch: lauren@bizcommunity.com
 = Celebrating African creativity: Lucky Star and Chepa Streetwear collab on Phatsimo collection - 7 Jun 2023

- PayJustNow's CEO on the benefits of 'buy now pay later' for consumers and businesses - 6 Jun 2023
- #YouthMonth: Glow getter Ayanda Majola talks Yanda Cosmetics venture - 2 Jun 2023
- SA retailers and consumers count the costs of a collapsing state - 1 Jun 2023
- Jane Wurwand's journey building the Dermalogica skincare empire - 22 May 2023

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>