



**F**rom the Field shares insights from Banfield Pet Hospital veterinary team members. Drawing from the nationwide practice's extensive research, as well as findings from its electronic veterinary medical records database and more than 8 million annual pet visits, this column is intended to explore topics and spark conversations relevant to veterinary practices that ultimately help create a better world for pets.

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**MEET THE  
AUTHOR**

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## Focus on Overweight and Obesity in Dogs

**B**anfield Pet Hospital recently released its 2017 *State of Pet Health Report*, highlighting a widespread trend of overweight pets nationwide. This is the largest report of its kind, capturing medical data from more than 2.5 million dogs cared for by Banfield in 2016.

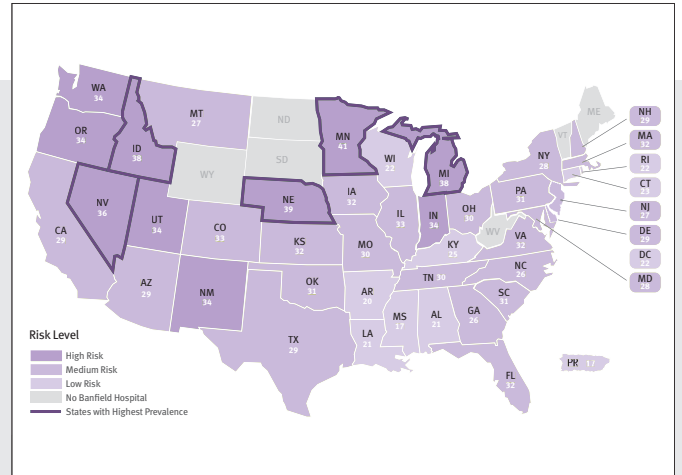
According to this year's report, 1 in 3 pets that visited a Banfield hospital last year was diagnosed as overweight or obese—and in the past 10 years, Banfield witnessed a **158% increase in overweight dogs**.

Kirk J. Breuninger, VMD, MPH, is a member of the Banfield Applied Research and Knowledge (BARK) team, where he performs and disseminates research that contributes to advancing medical quality, patient safety, and medical decision making. He received his veterinary degree from University of Pennsylvania and his Master of Public Health degree from Temple University. He is an inaugural member of the AVMA Early Career Development Committee, was awarded the 2009 George B. Wolff Legislative Leadership Award, and was recognized as the 2015 Pennsylvania Veterinarian of the Year by the Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association.

The top 5 states with the highest prevalence of overweight dogs were Minnesota (41%), Nebraska (39%), Michigan (38%), Idaho (38%), and Nevada (36%). Indiana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Washington tied for fifth place at 34%. The prevalence estimates for each state are shown in **FIGURE 1**. How did your state do?

Here are some tips and tricks for talking with your clients about their dog's weight:

- Prevention is key. Remind owners that regular check-ups and nutritional counseling can help keep their dogs at a healthy weight.
- Show, don't tell. Educate your clients about body condition scoring, and show them how their pet ranks.
- Give treats in moderation. Advise clients to take note of how many treats they give their dog per day.
  - Treats should not make up more than 10% of a dog's daily caloric consumption.
  - Clients can offer rewards other than food, such as belly rubs or playing with a favorite toy.



**FIGURE 1.** 2016 overweight prevalence in dogs.

- If food is given as a reward, clients can substitute low-calorie snacks such as baby carrots for high-calorie treats.

For more client education tools, as well as a host of other resources, visit [stateofpethealth.com](http://stateofpethealth.com). **TVN**

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