



From 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.

THE BIG PICTURE

After reviewing medical records from at least 500,000 cats cared for at Banfield hospitals in 2016, it was revealed there has been a more than 169% increase in overweight cats over the past 10 years.



MEET THE AUTHOR

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Focus on Overweight and Obesity in Cats

In the last *From the Field* column, I reported on dog-specific findings from Banfield Pet Hospital's 2017 *State of Pet Health Report*, which highlights a widespread trend of overweight pets nationwide.

When we looked at medical records from the more than 500,000 cats cared for at Banfield hospitals in 2016, we discovered felines are faring even worse than their canine counterparts, with **more than a 169% increase** in overweight cats over the past 10 years.

Rachel Beck is a certified veterinary technician and credentialed project manager on the Veterinary Medical Programs team at Banfield Pet Hospital. She currently leads a team of project managers who specialize in implementation. Having been in the veterinary field for over 15 years, she has served roles both in hospitals and at Banfield's central office. She is passionate about engaging the whole veterinary team in proactive health and wellness as well as about career pathing for paraprofessionals in the industry. She resides in Portland, Oregon, with her significant other and 2 cats.

The top five states with the highest prevalence of overweight cats included Minnesota (46%), Nebraska (43%), Iowa (42%), Idaho (40%) and Delaware (39%). The prevalence estimates for each state are listed on stateofpethealth.com. How did your state do?

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

- **Prevention is key.** Have cat-friendly strategies in place in your hospital. This will help create a less stressful atmosphere for your feline patients and will encourage pet owners to bring their cats in for regular check-ups and nutritional counseling, which can help keep their cats at a healthy weight and catch any medical issues that could be contributing to weight gain.
- There are some great resources and strategies related to cat-friendly practices through the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP):
 - Designate separate areas for cats in the waiting and treatment areas
 - Provide a cat-only exam room
 - When possible, complete procedures in the exam room
 - Consider providing a hiding place for the cat by utilizing kennel covers (when medically appropriate)
 - Use calming pheromone sprays or diffusers
 - Brush up on feline and low-stress handling techniques
- **Show, don't tell.** It's often difficult for cat owners to recognize their pet is overweight. This may be due to the distribution of fat on a cat's body, the amount of fur present or misconceptions about ideal weight. A graphic of body condition scoring (**FIGURE 1**) can be a useful tool as you have these conversations.
- **Give treats in moderation.** Treats should not make up more than 10% of a cat's daily caloric consumption. Advise clients to take note of how many treats they give their cat per day.
- **Encourage exercise.** Getting cats to exercise can be a challenge, so determining the right strategy that fits that client's and pet's individual needs and lifestyle is important. Increasing exercise by just 10 minutes every day can have a positive impact on a cat's overall well-being; this can include:
 - Using a laser pointer
 - Playing with a feather toy
 - Increasing mealtime activity by dividing meals into multiple dishes and placing throughout the house

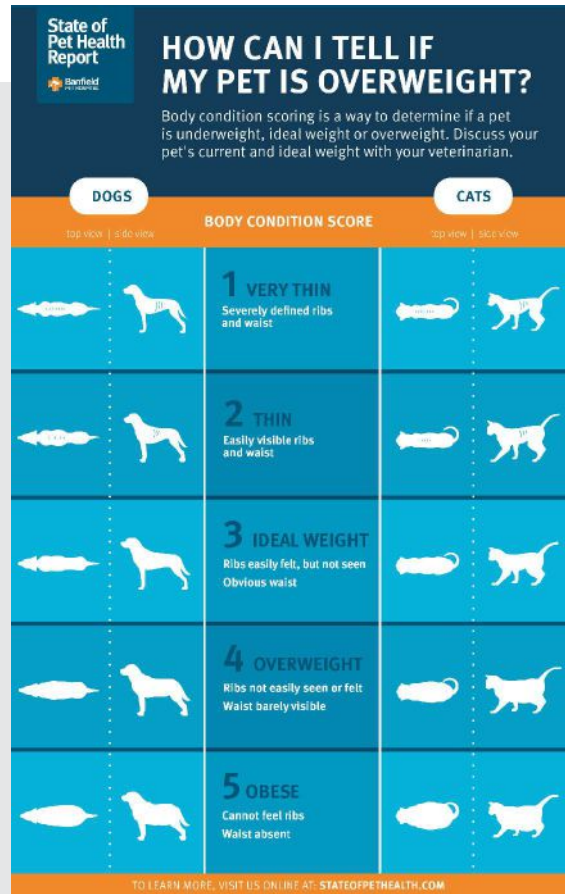


FIGURE 1. Body condition scale.

- **Share your own experiences.** Even those of us in the veterinary profession can struggle to keep our cats at a healthy weight. Sharing personal stories can help connect with clients and help them understand that weight loss in cats is possible. Consider having a few “before” and “after” pictures to drive the conversation.

For more client education tools and a host of other resources, visit stateofpethealth.com. **TVN**

Most Obese Cats by State

The top five states with the highest prevalence of overweight cats included

Minnesota	46%
Nebraska	43%
Iowa	42%
Idaho	40%
Delaware	39%



Find out how your state ranks at stateofpethealth.com.