

Pet Care



Owners Tackle Pet Obesity

As pets increasingly share couches and snacks with their owners, veterinarians are sounding the alarm on rising rates of obesity in dogs and cats.

Extra pounds can shorten lifespans, contribute to diabetes, joint pain and heart disease, and limit quality of life. In response, pet fitness has become a growing sector, with gyms, training programs and at-home equipment helping animals slim down and stay active.

As more resources become available, from gyms to gadgets, owners have more options than ever to keep pets fit. Addressing weight management early not only prevents chronic illness but also ensures that animals enjoy active years filled with play, companionship and vitality.

The American Kennel Club says creating a fitness plan for dogs can help them avoid arthritis and prevent injuries. They say the first step in developing a plan is consulting with a veterinarian and making sure the goals you set are appropriate and safe for your pet's age and physical condition. It's especially important to limit strenuous exercise for puppies whose joints are still developing. They offer a series of exercises that you can do



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with your dog and recommend getting involved in a local AKC FIT DOG program.

GYMS AND STRUCTURED PROGRAMS

Across the country, pet gyms have opened with programs designed to get animals moving in safe, controlled environments. Treadmills built for dogs allow for indoor runs regardless of weather, while swimming pools provide low-impact exercise that builds strength without stressing joints.

Agility courses are another popular option, with tunnels,

jumps and weave poles that encourage pets to burn energy and develop coordination. Trainers at these facilities often create custom fitness plans.

AT-HOME TOOLS AND DAILY ROUTINES

Not every owner has access to a pet gym, but at-home tools make it easier to build activity into daily life. Compact treadmills, puzzle feeders and toys that reward movement with treats encourage pets to stay active indoors. Even simple changes — such as longer walks, games of fetch or stair

climbs — can make a difference in maintaining a healthy weight.

Nutrition is a critical piece of the puzzle. Measuring food, monitoring calorie intake and reducing table scraps help prevent weight gain. Many veterinarians recommend high-protein, low-calorie diets. Owners who track progress with apps or wearable devices designed for pets can monitor activity levels over time and adjust routines.

FIGHTING OBESITY TOGETHER

The rise in pet obesity

mirrors trends among humans, making the problem one of lifestyle as much as diet. Families who commit to exercising with their pets often see benefits on both sides of the leash. Dogs may serve as motivation for owners to get outside and walk more often, while cats benefit from interactive play sessions also strengthen bonds with their people.

Pet food companies, veterinarians and shelters regularly promote fitness challenges and educational programs. The message is simple: Healthy habits help pets live longer, happier lives.

Marking Milestones with Style

Pets have become family members in every sense of the word, and owners are increasingly eager to celebrate their lives the way they would for children or close friends.

From birthday parties to custom portraits, the trend of honoring animals with special experiences and keepsakes is on the rise. Businesses have noticed, offering everything from dog bakeries to memorial items that help owners cherish their pets long after they are gone.

Whether it is a birthday party with a bone-shaped cake, a portrait session capturing a puppy's first year or a keepsake to remember a beloved companion, celebrating pets has become an important part of modern pet ownership. The trend underscores the depth of the human-animal bond and the desire to honor it at every stage of life.

PARTIES AND PASTRIES

Pet birthday parties have grown beyond simple gatherings at home. Owners book event spaces, hire photographers and invite fellow pet lovers for celebrations that can rival human birthdays. Cakes and treats designed for



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animals take center stage. Specialty bakeries now offer items free of harmful ingredients, using peanut butter, pumpkin or carob to create safe indulgences.

Some bakeries even craft elaborate tiered cakes or cookies shaped like bones and paw prints. Cupcakes with personalized icing have become popular party favors for canine and feline guests. These celebrations emphasize fun but also reflect how deeply bonded many people feel to their pets.

PORTRAITS AND PHOTO SHOOTS

Photography has become another popular way to celebrate pets. Professional photographers now specialize in capturing animals in candid or staged settings, producing portraits that hang proudly on living room walls. Seasonal mini-sessions — with backdrops for holidays or birthdays — attract pet owners eager to document milestones.

Social media has added another layer to the trend.

Owners use professional shots to share their pet's personality online, sometimes even creating entire accounts dedicated to the animal. The images often become treasured keepsakes, reminders of the joy pets bring daily.

HONORING MEMORIES

As much as owners celebrate milestones, many also seek meaningful ways to honor pets when their time has passed. Businesses provide a wide range of memorial options,

from clay paw prints to custom urns and jewelry infused with a pet's ashes. Portrait artists create paintings or digital renderings based on photographs, offering families a lasting image to remember their companions.

The growing availability of these services reflects how pets occupy a central place in households. Owners no longer view celebrations and memorials as indulgent, but as natural extensions of the love and gratitude they feel for their animals.

Designing Spaces for Pets

For many households, pets are as much a part of the home as any family member.

That reality has influenced the way people design their living spaces.

From scratch-resistant flooring to durable furniture fabrics, homeowners are increasingly seeking ways to make houses both stylish and practical for four-legged residents. Builders, landscapers and interior designers are responding with products and services that balance comfort, safety and durability.

FLOORS BUILT TO LAST

Flooring is one of the first considerations for pet owners. Carpets can trap hair, odors and stains, making them less ideal for households with dogs or cats.

Instead, many turn to options like vinyl plank, tile or sealed hardwood, which resist scratches and are easier to clean.

Area rugs made from washable materials have also gained popularity, allowing owners to protect floors without sacrificing design. Some companies market lines specifically tested against pet claws and spills, giving consumers peace of mind when choosing materials. The goal is to ensure that floors withstand daily traffic while



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maintaining their appearance for years.

FURNITURE AND DECOR CHOICES

Furniture makers are taking note of the demands of pet owners. Sofas and chairs are now available in fabrics designed to resist stains, repel fur and stand up to claws. Microfiber, leather alternatives and performance fabrics are among the most requested materials. Slipcovers and machine-washable cushions add another layer of

practicality.

Decor choices can reflect a pet-friendly mindset. End tables with built-in crates or beds provide function while blending with living room style. Elevated feeding stations reduce mess and protect floors. Even window treatments are designed with pets in mind, with cordless blinds or shades that prevent accidents.

OUTDOOR SPACES AND LANDSCAPING

The yard has become

another focal point for pet-friendly design. Homeowners are installing artificial turf resistant to digging and easy to rinse clean, while still providing a soft surface for play. Fencing solutions balance security with aesthetics, offering pets room to roam without compromising curb appeal.

Landscapers recommend non-toxic plants to ensure safety if pets chew on greenery. Shaded areas, water features and designated potty zones help create outdoor

environments that are comfortable and safe. Some designs even include agility equipment or custom dog runs to encourage exercise.

As the market grows, pet-friendly features are being integrated into new home construction and remodels, rather than added later. For families who consider pets part of daily life, these investments make homes more livable. The result is a space where comfort, safety and style work together for both people and their animals.

Companions that Heal

Pets have always been beloved companions, but growing research highlights their deeper role in supporting mental health.

From therapy animals that visit hospitals to emotional support pets at home, animals are helping people manage stress, anxiety and isolation. The bond between humans and pets is increasingly recognized as a vital part of overall wellness.

THERAPY ANIMALS BRING COMFORT

Therapy animals are specially trained to provide comfort in clinical and community settings. They visit hospitals, nursing homes, schools and disaster recovery sites, offering calm and companionship during difficult times. Dogs are the most common, but cats, rabbits and even miniature horses have been part of therapy programs.

Health professionals note the presence of therapy animals can lower blood pressure, reduce stress hormones and encourage social interaction. These visits often become highlights for patients, breaking up routines and providing a sense of joy. While therapy animals do not replace medical treatment, they add an important layer of support for emotional well-being.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AT HOME

Beyond organized programs, pets at home serve as emotional support for millions of people. Emotional support animals, often prescribed by a licensed professional, provide comfort to individuals with mental health



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conditions such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. Unlike service animals, they do not require specialized training, but their presence alone can ease symptoms and improve daily life.

Even without a prescription, many owners find the routine of caring for a pet creates stability. Feeding, walking or playing with an animal adds structure to the day, encouraging physical activity and offering a sense of purpose.

For people living alone, pets can reduce feelings of isolation and provide steady companionship.

WELLNESS AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The benefits extend beyond individual households. Dog parks, pet-friendly events and community volunteering with animals create social opportunities that build human connections. Sharing stories and experiences about pets often becomes an easy icebreaker, especially for people who might otherwise struggle with social anxiety.

Wellness programs are increasingly incorporating animals into their designs. College campuses bring therapy dogs to relieve student stress during exams. Workplaces experiment with

pet-friendly policies or invite animals to special events to boost morale. These efforts reflect the growing recognition that pets play an important role in promoting mental health at both personal and community levels.

As conversations about wellness continue, pets remain central to the discussion. Whether through trained therapy visits or the quiet presence of a cat at home, animals provide comfort that reaches beyond words. They remind their owners of connection, responsibility and unconditional affection — qualities are critical to mental health in an often-stressful world.

Gadgets Transform Pet Care

Technology is no longer just for people. From GPS collars to smart feeders, pet owners are increasingly turning to gadgets to keep their animals safe, healthy and entertained.

What started as niche products for early adopters has become a booming sector of the pet care industry.

KEEPING TRACK OF PETS

Pet owners worried about a dog slipping the leash or a cat that roams outdoors now have high-tech ways to monitor them. GPS-enabled collars and tags allow people to track an animal's movements on a smartphone app. Many products feature virtual fence alerts, sending an alarm if the pet wanders outside a designated area.

For owners of escape-prone pets, the reassurance is worth the cost of the monthly subscriptions. According to Fact MR, recovery rates for pets with GPS-enabled collars is greater than 80% and they project the market will grow from \$353.4 million in 2025 to \$1.1 billion by 2035.

Beyond location tracking, some collars now measure activity levels, sleep patterns and even heart rate. The data



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helps owners and veterinarians spot potential health issues before they become serious.

FEEDING AND MONITORING FROM AFAR

Automatic feeders have long been a staple for busy households, but today's smart

feeders go a step further. Owners can dispense meals on a schedule or with the touch of an app, ensuring their pet never misses dinner. Some models include cameras and microphones, allowing people to watch and talk to their pets while away from home.

There are even high-tech

models that identify which pet is eating from the bowl or pair with a pet's existing microchip so each pet receives its own specified food and amount. This is especially useful for multi-pet households where at least one pet has a medical condition or needs weight management.

Smart water fountains help monitor how much each pet is drinking and whether they are staying properly hydrated, an issue that especially applies to cats. The fountains alert owners about changes in drinking habits so they can detect diseases early.

Pet cameras have also surged in popularity. Compact devices sit on a counter or shelf, streaming live video to a smartphone. Owners can check in during lunch breaks, calm an anxious dog with their voice or even toss a treat with the push of a button. For animals prone to separation anxiety, the connection can be comforting.

APPS FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The digital pet revolution extends to smartphones. Apps now track everything from vaccination records to exercise routines. Some pair with wearable devices to log steps or calories burned, while others send reminders for medication or vet appointments.

Veterinarians say the information can be invaluable, allowing them to make more informed decisions about diet, exercise and medical care.

As with any technology, cost and privacy are concerns. GPS collars and smart feeders can range from \$100 to \$400, and many require subscription fees for advanced features. Still, industry analysts predict steady growth as pet owners look for new ways to keep their animals safe and connected.

On the Go with Pets

Traveling with pets has become easier thanks to a growing industry focused on pet-friendly amenities.

Airlines, hotels and even local attractions are competing to attract customers who don't want to leave their animals behind. What was once considered a hassle is now being reshaped into a service niche with convenience and comfort at its center.

AIRLINES ADAPT TO DEMAND

Most major airlines now allow small pets to travel in the cabin, provided they meet carrier requirements. Some carriers offer special reservations desks to handle pet-related requests, while others provide frequent traveler programs that track pet miles. For larger animals, climate-controlled cargo holds and priority boarding reduce stress and improve safety.

Specialty pet transport services have also grown, offering door-to-door flights or charter options for families relocating with multiple animals. These services often include veterinarians on call, real-time tracking and customized itineraries. The goal is to reassure owners their animals are safe throughout the journey.

HOTELS AND RESORTS WELCOME PETS

Hospitality brands are



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paying attention to the millions of households traveling with pets each year. Pet-friendly hotels now go beyond simply allowing dogs in a room. Amenities often include pet beds, food bowls, welcome treats and on-site walking areas. Some resorts even provide grooming stations, doggy day care or menus prepared by in-house chefs.

Luxury properties are expanding the idea further by offering concierge services dedicated to pets. These might include arranging walking

tours, finding local groomers, scheduling veterinary visits or recommending pet-friendly restaurants and cafes. The message is clear: Pets are considered valued guests, not an afterthought.

LOCAL DESTINATIONS STEP UP

Communities are recognizing that pet-friendly tourism can boost local economies. Outdoor shopping districts promote dog-friendly patios, and wineries host “yappy hours” where owners can

bring their animals. Hiking trails, campgrounds and beach towns are expanding access for leashed pets, often with waste stations, water bowls and clear signage.

Pet-friendly attractions can build loyalty. Cities with established dog parks, pet boutiques and annual pet-centered festivals make themselves appealing to both visitors and residents. Destination marketing campaigns increasingly highlight these features, knowing that travelers often choose where to go

based on whether their pets will be welcome.

The combination of airline policies, hotel amenities and community initiatives has created a broad support network for pet travel. Owners who once struggled to balance vacation plans with animal care now find options that allow them to bring their companions along. As this trend continues to grow, the idea of a “pet travel concierge” may become a standard expectation rather than a luxury.

The Rise of Pet Influencers

Household pets are no longer just family members. Increasingly, they are becoming social media stars with devoted followings and real influence in the marketplace.

Owners who post photos and videos of their cats, dogs, parrots and even reptiles are finding an adorable personality can attract thousands of followers and catch the eye of local businesses.

BUILDING A FOLLOWING

The formula is simple: A steady stream of cute or funny content, a distinctive voice and consistency. What starts with a handful of likes from friends can grow into a dedicated community when posts resonate. Dogs with a quirky habit, cats with striking looks or birds that perform tricks often stand out in crowded feeds.

Owners sometimes manage accounts as if the animal itself were speaking, while others showcase behind-the-scenes glimpses of training, playtime or adventures. High engagement comes from relatable moments — the messy puppy, the aloof cat or the rescued pet thriving in a new home.

LOCAL BUSINESSES TAKE NOTICE

As follower counts grow,

local businesses have started partnering with pet influencers. Groomers, pet boutiques, trainers and veterinarians see opportunities to promote their services through collaborations. A dog with a large local following might appear in ads for a pet food brand or model new collars for a neighborhood shop.

Small businesses often provide free products or services in exchange for social media mentions. Larger campaigns

may involve paid sponsorships or event appearances. The arrangement benefits both sides; businesses gain authentic promotion, while owners offset the costs of caring for their pets.

BEYOND FAME AND FOLLOWERS

For many, running a pet account remains a labor of love. Maintaining daily posts, responding to comments and keeping up with algorithm

changes takes time. Still, the payoff extends beyond potential revenue. Owners say the accounts create community, connecting them with other pet lovers who share advice, encouragement and support.

Social media platforms also amplify causes. Rescue groups and shelters use pet personalities to promote adoptions and fundraisers. A cat with a strong following can spotlight a local shelter in need of volunteers. A dog known for agility videos

may inspire donations for animal therapy programs.

The trend shows no signs of slowing. As long as people continue scrolling for content that entertains and lifts spirits, pets will have a place in the influencer economy. For businesses, the growing role of pet influencers represents a new way to reach audiences. For owners, it is a chance to celebrate their animals while building connections that extend beyond the screen.



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