
Golden Retriever Rescue of Wisconsin, Inc.

The biggest health problem seen with Golden Retrievers is both easily prevented and treated. It happens in the most caring, loving homes. This sad problem is an epidemic. Unfortunately, some people think that it's funny, cute or not even a problem at all.

Purina completed a lifelong study of retrievers from the same litters. Half of the puppies were overfed and the other half fed a healthy amount throughout their lives. The obese dogs died an average of two years earlier than the ideal weight dogs! That is astounding. Further, imagine the decreased quality of life of the obese dogs due to the diabetes and arthritis pain they suffered. Owners suffer as well with costly vet bills and by having to watch the discomfort of their beloved companions. It is so easy for Golden Retrievers and their owners to fall into these situations.

Most all Golden Retrievers have *far* more appetite than is needed for one dog! They generally will eat any amount of food and any kind of food that they are given. Very few dogs can be free fed by a perpetually full bowl and still maintain a healthy weight. So, it is very important to measure your dog's daily food and treat intake.

All bags of dog food have feeding charts on their sides. Oddly enough, most people are surprised by this! The chart gives a measurement in kitchen cups of food for a given weight in pounds. It seems simple, but you have to think about a couple of important things when using this chart:

- 1) It is a good starting place. Dogs that don't get much exercise will require less than the recommend amount of kitchen cups. Also, like people, some individual dogs are more prone to gaining weight than others.
- 2) Before looking at this chart you need to figure out your dog's ideal weight. We need to feed according to your dog's ideal weight, not his current obese weight. See the diagram to help you figure this out.
- 3) For an obese dog: once you know the ideal weight check the chart for the recommended amount. Now feed 20-25% less than that amount. Give half in the morning and half at supper time. This will be the dog's dieting amount until it hits its ideal weight. Then at the ideal weight, and only then, feed the recommended or suggested amount. Monitor your pet's weight and keep in mind point number one.

Treats are okay, but please consider a few things. Instead of dog biscuits, pig's ears or rawhide, choose a healthy low fat treat. For example, try carrots, other vegetables or fruits. Can you believe a medium sized rawhide with a knot on each end has 1000 calories? *It's pure fat!* Further, the average bargain dog biscuit treats are mostly fat—don't trust what the front of the box says. You can buy dog biscuits made by premium dog food companies and these biscuits tend to mimic the good nutrition of their dry kibble. Of course, stay away from grapes, raisins and onions—these foods are toxic to

Golden Retriever Rescue of Wisconsin, Inc.

dogs. Remember that most dogs really get more enjoyment from positive attention than the joy of eating the treat.

Lastly, most pet owners just don't have the time or energy to exercise their dogs as much as they would like to. However, you can have a retriever that actually looks like it is well exercised. How do you do it? It all starts at the bowl! Don't put the extra food in the bowl and the calories won't accumulate on the dog. Also, if you are dieting your retriever and it cannot lose weight, see your vet. A special blood test called Free T4 by Equilibrium Dialysis lets your vet screen for hypothyroidism that is common in Golden Retrievers. The thyroid gland sets the body's metabolic rate. The thyroid gland is like the idle of a car engine. If the gland isn't making enough thyroid hormone, the body's metabolic rate or idle runs slow. As a result, calories are not burned, but stored as fat. This disease is relatively inexpensive and very safe to treat.

Many adult Golden Retrievers are 7-9 in body condition due to overfeeding and lack of exercise. The following chart and information are courtesy of Ralston Purina.

Remember that the number of treats you feed your dog has nothing to do with how much you love him. Teach your dog a trick, take him for a walk, play a game or just pet him and say, "Good dog!" Your Golden craves *you* more than any treat. So, don't kill your dog with kindness of too much food.

Golden Retriever Rescue of Wisconsin, Inc.

Canine Obesity

GRRoW Hotline: 888-655-4753

        	<p>1. EMACIATED</p> <p>2. VERY THIN</p> <p>3. THIN</p> <p>4. UNDERWEIGHT</p> <p>5. IDEAL</p> <p>6. OVERWEIGHT</p> <p>7. HEAVY</p> <p>8. OBESE</p> <p>9. GROSSLY OBESE</p>	<p>Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernable body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.</p> <p>Ribs, lumbar vertebrae and pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some evidence of other bony prominence. Minimal loss of muscle mass.</p> <p>Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.</p> <p>Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.</p> <p>Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked when viewed from the side.</p> <p>Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernable viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.</p> <p>Ribs palpable with difficulty, heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be absent.</p> <p>Ribs not palpable under heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distension may be present.</p>
--	---	--