

MORE THAN REVEALS THAT SHARING ISN'T ALWAYS CARING AS LOCKDOWN LIFESTYLE TAKE ITS TOLL ON PET HEALTH

- More than a third (35%) of pet owners say lockdown lifestyle is impacting their pets' habits
- Over a third (34%) confess to feeding their pets more treats in lockdown, while one in three (30%) are unable to spot the signs of their pet being overweight
- MORE THAN provides top tips for Britain's pet owners on how to keep pets' health in check

Brits' changing lifestyle habits are taking a toll on pets' weight and risk long-term health complications for our furry friends, according to MORE THAN.

Snacking and unhealthy diets are revealed as one of the main pet health issues, with more than a third (34%) of pet owners admitting to feeding their pet more treats during lockdown. The study of 2,000 dog and cat owners also found that the amount of food being given to pets has also increased, with one in five (22%) feeding their pets more regularly and one in ten (10%) feeding their pets bigger portions than they would normally.

There are growing concerns about the long-term impact pet obesity can have on pet's health with over 50% of dogs in the UK — and around 40% of cats — now overweight or obese¹. Worryingly, three in ten (30%) pet owners would be unable to confidently spot the signs of their pets being overweight, while one in ten (11%) do not know the recommended healthy weight for their pet.

Diabetes, heart disease and arthritis are amongst the most common health-related conditions caused or worsened by pet obesity, with the average diabetes-related claim amounting to £1,882.94 according to MORE THAN research (conducted from January 2018 – December 2020).

Graham Nicholls, Head of Pet Insurance at MORE THAN, comments: *“As a nation, we've been incredibly resilient to the pressures this pandemic has brought on us. We've adapted and changed our lifestyles to fit. While the odd treat to reward ourselves and pets is often much needed, what we don't quite realise is the long term impact our habits can have on our pets.”*

The research from MORE THAN also highlights a growing trend in vegan diets for pets, with one in eight (12%) owners feeding their cats and dogs more meat-free food products during lockdown. The vegan pet diet trend has been spurred by the recent social media posts of high-profile celebrities, showing how they have introduced plant-based diets for their dogs.

Graham continues: *“While there is a growing selection of safe vegan pet foods on the market, feeding meat-free food to pets without veterinary guidance and careful research could result in our pets missing the vital vitamins and nutrients needed to maintain a healthy lifestyle.”*

The findings also highlight the lockdown habits which have impacted pets in a positive way. With more time at home, MORE THAN has found that nearly two-thirds of cat owners (64%) are playing with their cat more, while over half (53%) of dog owners are taking their dogs out for more walks.

To keep pet health matters in check, Graham Nicholls, Head of Pet Insurance at MORE THAN, provides five top tips for keeping your pet healthy:

1. **Make sure your pet is eating the right food:** Pets need to stick to a strict diet, which can change depending on breed and age. If you aren't sure your pet has the best diet, speak to your vet to find out the exact type of food they should be eating.

2. **Give your pet the best food you can:** A lot of cheaper pet food contains filler which gives no nutritional value to your pet. Better quality food is more likely to contain protein and vegetables which are less fattening.
3. **Cut back on snacks and treats:** Many pet owners give their pets the correct amount of food but give too many snacks. Cutting back on these or finding a healthier alternative is an easy way to keep your pet healthy.
4. **Stick to a schedule:** Although 'Free-feeding' may feel like the best way to make sure your pet doesn't go hungry, it can encourage over-eating. Sticking to a clear schedule makes sure you know how much food your pet is eating, helping to prevent obesity.
5. **Exercise more:** It's important that all pets get enough exercise to keep them fit and healthy and with much of the population spending more time at home right now, it's easy to incorporate this into daily life in line with government guidelines.

For further information on keeping your pets' healthy, click [here](#).

ENDS

All data (unless stated otherwise) was commissioned by More Than and conducted by Censuswide from 22nd January 2021 – 26th January 2021. The total sample size was 2,013 cat and dog owners residing in the UK, aged 18+.

¹ Pet Food Manufacturer's Association, Pet Obesity Ten Years On 2009 – 2019 [here](#)

About MORE THAN

MORE THAN is the direct financial services brand of RSA. Established in 2001, the company offers car, home, pet, business, and travel insurance.

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