

The Wylie Wellness Chronicles - Diet



What does 'staying in shape' actually mean?

For a lot of us 'staying in shape' means not being too fat!



When it comes to weight control most people believe that this is simply a balance of calories in (via food) vs calories out (via activity levels and bodily functions)

If only it were so simple!



There are many other factors involved in staying in shape:

Food and physiology

The type of food eaten AND how our bodies are equipped to deal with the food

For example, humans cannot live on a diet of meadow grass alone, like horses and cows
- we have evolved differently

The same is true for our carnivorous pets (dogs and cats) who have evolved to eat diets based on meat rather than grains and carbohydrates

Sleep

Our bodies have hormones (ghrelin and leptin) that control hunger and satiety. A lack of sleep can affect these hormones leading to overeating, weight gain and a host of diseases such as diabetes and pancreatitis

Stress

Excessive stress can also interfere with these hormones causing overeating and unhealthy ways that the body deals with food

[Note, some stress in our lives is important to maintain good health]

Exercise

Plays an important role, not only in weight control but also muscle mass, resilience and well-being

Parasites and infections

(including those we vaccinate against)

Can also affect weight and wellbeing

Eating behaviours

Cats are predators and so failing to provide cats with opportunities for predatory-like behaviour can result in obesity and misplaced aggressiveness



To understand staying in shape, we need to understand that all these factors are interconnected and that the diet is only one aspect of a healthy lifestyle

However, today let us focus on the question of food and physiology

At Wylies we always start from the evolutionary standpoint

Dogs and cats have developed teeth and jaws for hunting, short intestines and digestive juices for breaking down animal tissues as opposed to plants

Humans have evolved to be hunters and gatherers, so our teeth, jaws, intestines and bodies are suited to eating a variety of animal products and plants



A good starting point for keeping our pets in good shape is feeding them meat

How much meat?



Cats are **obligate carnivores**

This means they must be fed meat because they are incapable of making some important proteins found in meat such as taurine and arginine



Dogs are **facultative opportunist carnivores**

Their diets can be more varied than cats but generally consist of approximately 70% meat and 30% vegetable/plant matter for optimal health

The actual amounts of food required vary by age, breed and activity level. Puppies often require 10% of their own body weight per day for healthy development. This percentage decreases as they reach adulthood. Working adult dogs such as Border Collies will often need 6% or more of their body weight per day whilst a sedentary Bulldog may only need 3% or less per day

There are no hard and fast rules, so we treat each pet as an individual when we recommend a diet



Hunting behaviour

Keeping our pets in good shape involves replicating their predatory behaviours, as much as possible, at mealtimes. This helps with weight control, mental stimulation, digestive health and general wellbeing. Occasionally missing meals (as in the wild) is also a good way to manage appetite and weight



Microbiome

The microbiome refers to the community of microbes (bacteria, viruses, yeasts) that live in and on our bodies. In humans, our microbiome has 200 times as much genetic material as we have. It weighs 2.5-3kg and many consider it another organ of the body!

We are only just waking up to the importance of a healthy and diverse microbiome for our health and wellbeing

In humans, links to our immunity and diseases such as obesity, cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis and others have been well described by over 13000 research articles published between 2013-2017

Not surprisingly, the microbes that live in dogs and cats thrive best when fed a variety of animal products – muscle, organ meat, skin and bones – they are carnivores after all!



Does your dog or cat have any of these problems?

Diabetes, cancer, bad breath, obesity, itchy skin, chronic diarrhoea and/or vomiting, allergies, epilepsy, arthritis or bladder problems

We have seen a dramatic increase in these diseases over the last few decades

Studies consistently show the benefits of feeding meat to dogs and cats:

Improved coat quality and energy levels

Improved oral hygiene and gut health

Improved immune function and resistance to cancer

Much improved management and control of diabetes, epilepsy, bladder stones and bladder disease

Reduced allergies and immune-mediated diseases

Effortless weight management

At Wylies, we believe that 'Staying in shape' means...

Feeding our carnivorous pets food that they have evolved to eat over many millions of years in a way that encourages their natural feeding behaviours



Diet is one of the pillars of a healthy life – for our pets and us

Look out for more Wylie Wellness Chronicles in the coming weeks where we will share our thoughts on Wellness