

Fall is Here!

And with it comes cooler temperatures! Now that the oppressive heat of summer is (hopefully) over, and before the cold ice and snow of winter arrive, let's take advantage of the milder temperatures and get our dogs (and us as well) some wholesome exercise.

Why is exercise so important? Many reasons! Cardiovascular health, muscle and bone development, healthy weight, mental health and well-being, to name just a few. Proper exercise can help with anxiety and stress leading to calmer and more confident dogs.

What is proper exercise and how much? That really depends on the dog and a number of factors such as age, breed, and overall health. If you already take regular walks with your dog, try to do something different. Take a different path, or try hiking with your dog. Hiking offers so much more than the "usual" walk around the neighborhood. This is an especially beautiful time of year to enjoy the woods with your dog with all the leaves changing color. You can even go to a park and just meander around and allow your dog to have a "sniff fest."

In John 14:15 (King James Version) Jesus says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Now you may ask what does this have to do with doggie exercise? We all love our dogs. But you can see from this statement from Jesus that love is not a feeling. Love is an ACTION. If you love me...you will DO something.

The same is true with our spouses, children, and our dogs. We love them so we care for them. One of the easiest things you can do to give your dog a long and healthy life is to keep their weight at a proper level. Overweight dogs have shorter life spans and more health issues like arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and more. Surveys show that approximately 60% of dogs in the USA are overweight. Overweight dogs are so commonplace that most people today cannot even tell if their dog is overweight.

Take the time today to review the Body Score Chart on this page
<https://www.petobesityprevention.org/pet-weight-check>

Anywhere between 4 and 5 is ideal. It is actually better to have a dog slightly underweight rather than slightly overweight.

Besides exercise, we should be sure to be feeding our dogs a healthy diet. Dogs have no nutritional requirement for carbohydrates. Diets should have an appropriate ratio of protein, fat, and complex carbs such as those found in green leafy vegetables. Avoid starchy foods and simple carbs. Treats are valuable for training but make sure you are figuring these into your dog's caloric intake. Feed only healthy treats, preferably single ingredient treats. Avoid treats that have additives like salt, sugar, and food colorings. Doing this will help maintain your dog's overall health.

One more thing about fall, don't think the cooler temperatures mean that flea and tick activity will slow down! In fact, they may get worse. Dr Judy Morgan says "As the temperatures drop and the leaves start to fall, fleas and ticks become more active in their search for warm-blooded hosts. While many pet owners associate these pesky parasites with warmer months, they are far from dormant during the fall season. In fact, the conditions in early autumn are ideal for their survival and reproduction." So, keep your dog out of those tall grasses and deep leaf piles. When hiking, stick to the trails!

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions.

Prepared by C4C Canine Program Team for use by C4C Members.