

Heeler Info

Providing helpful information, tips, and advise about Heeler dogs

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Helping your overweight Australian Cattle Dog lose weight

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Is my Australian Cattle Dog overweight?

The expected weight range of a Blue Heeler is 14 to 16kg (31 to 35 lbs) for a female and 15 to 16kg (33 to 35 lbs) for a male. However, a number on the scales is not a good indication of whether they are overweight.

The easiest way to tell if your Blue Heeler needs to lose a little bit of weight is to do a simple hands-on test.

Firstly, run your hands along the side of your Heeler's torso. You should be able to feel the individual contour of your Blue Heeler's ribs. There should be a light layer of fat but the rib cage should still be able to be felt. If there is no fat covering the ribs at all your dog is probably underweight.

Secondly, look at your Blue Heeler from above. There should be a visually discernable waistline and you should be able to see an hourglass shape. There should also be visible muscle definition on a Blue Heeler.

Finally, Look at your Blue Heeler from the side. The rib cage should be lower than the belly.

Do Blue Heelers have obesity problems?

The Blue Heeler is a breed that is known to suffer a few health problems including eye problems, heart conditions, deafness, and orthopaedic issues such as hip dysplasia, and skin issues. They are also a breed that can be prone to obesity. They are an active breed and if they don't receive the exercise they require can be prone to weight gain. See here for more on [Blue Heeler exercise](#) needs.

Many Australian Cattle Dogs gain a lot of weight after being neutered or spayed. It is essential that you carefully monitor their calorie intake and provide sufficient exercise after being desexed.

They are also prone to Hypothyroidism which results in their easily being able to put on weight. Signs of Hypothyroidism include putting on weight without eating more, intolerance of the cold, and unhealthy changes in their coat.

If a blue Heeler is overweight they can become extremely lethargic making them less enthusiastic towards wanting to exercise. This can make it a lot more difficult to get them to lose the extra weight.

Health issues related to obesity in Blue Heelers

An obese Blue Heeler is a risk of developing health issues such as heart disease, metabolic and digestive disorders, and back pain. In addition, excessive weight can lead to bone, joint, and muscle issues. Blue Heelers are prone to hip dysplasia which is not helped by extra weight. These issues can result in shortening their lives by many years.

Just because there is a significant rate of incidence or impact of these issues in Blue Heelers does not mean your Heeler will have these problems. It just means that she is more at risk than other breeds.

How do I get my Blue Heeler to lose weight?

To lose weight, your Blue Heeler needs to be in a daily calorie deficit. Simply put they need to consume fewer calories than they use. This is the combination of two factors. Consuming fewer calories and burning more energy (calories).

Other helpful tips to aid with the weight loss journey include:

- Eliminate feeding any scraps or bits of your food.
- Any treats given should be included in the calorie limit.
- Ensure your Blue Heeler is eating plenty of fiber in their diet.
- Feed part or all of their food in food stuffing toys like a KONG. This way they will have to work for their food and will eat slower. Learn more about [work-to-eat projects](#).
- Replace unhealthy dog treats with healthy options such as baby carrots, green beans, celery, broccoli, cucumbers, sliced apples and bananas or ice cubes.
- Provide chew toys. Chewing is a natural instinctive thing for dogs. When a dog chews it releases endorphins to the brain giving them a calming feel good effect. It will also help distract them from

being hungry and thinking about food. For more on the [mental health benefits of chewing](#) see here.

- Spread their food allowance out into several meals throughout the day
- Ensure they drink plenty of water. For more on [dog hydration tips](#) see here.

Diet Plan for Overweight Blue Heeler

Before starting any diet plan with your Blue Heeler have your vet do a full examination. The advice given here is only a guideline and **does not** replace your vet's recommendations.

The first step in creating a diet plan for your Blue Heeler is to get an idea of how many calories they should be consuming daily. The table below shows how many calories a dog at a certain weight needs to maintain its current weight. This varies from dog to dog depending on their activity level and metabolism.

Important: This is only to give a rough estimate for the purposes of finding a starting point.

A diet is a long-term plan. Slashing calories by a large amount is unhealthy and your Blue Heeler will likely be extremely miserable. For the first week of their new diet, it is best to limit their calories to the suggested amount in the table relative to their current weight.

In the second week, you will need to reduce the calories by a further 5% or so. Monitor how they are coping with the reduced calorie intake. Weigh your Blue Heeler each week at the same time to monitor if they are losing weight. You want to aim for a loss of around 0.5 to 1lb a week. Once they are consistently losing 0.5 to 1lb a week on average you will know the appropriate amount of calories to feed each day.

Weight loss is not linear. Some weeks they may lose more, other weeks remain the same or even a slight gain. Don't be discouraged. Be consistent and stick to the plan and you will see the results.

Current Weight (KG)	Current Weight (lbs)	Kilocalories/Day
14	31	710
15	33	750
16	35	785
17	37.5	820
18	40	855
19	42	890
20	44	930

Estimated Maintenance Calorie/per day

Best food for overweight Blue Heelers

It is best to avoid feeding a homemade diet to a Blue Heeler that is trying to lose weight. This makes it difficult to know how many calories they are consuming and whether they are getting the right nutrient mix. The simplest way is to feed a premium dry dog food. This way you can measure the correct serving size and be confident they are getting the nutrients they require.

The weight-loss food you choose should have good levels of protein and fiber. Carbohydrates should also be low as any carbs that are not used as energy will be stored as fat.

Recommended Best food for overweight Blue Heeler

Hills Science Lite Weight Formula

Hills Science Diet is probably the most popular brand recommended by vets. This diet formula contains 289 calories per cup. It does contain 11% which is lower than most non-diet formulas. Fat is not really a big concern as it is usually the first source of fuel and is important in the healthy function of the organs and hormone balance. The biggest issue for a dog trying to lose weight are carbohydrates as any carbs not used for fuel will be stored as fat on the body.

Being a super premium vet recommended dog food, this is a little more expensive than some alternatives.

View [Hills Perfect Weight Formula](#) on Amazon.

Iams Adult Dry Dog Food for Healthy Weight

Iams is a much more budget-friendly food than Hills but is still a good quality complete formula. Contains 328 calories per cup and only 9% fat. Iams is not an obscure brand and comes from the makers of Eukanuba.

It also contains glucosamine and chondroitin which help with joint and bone health.

View [Iams Healthy Weight Formula](#) on Amazon

Suggested exercise for Blue Heeler weight loss

If your Blue Heeler is overweight or even obese it is best to give them less exercise than you would a typical Heeler. This may seem to be counterintuitive but this is to reduce the stress on their joints and tendons and heart and lungs due to the extra body weight.

As they begin to lose weight and become fitter you can gradually increase the volume of exercise. This can be as simple as gradually increasing the distance of their walks or giving them additional play with toys or games. Remember to make exercise enjoyable for them otherwise, they will be reluctant to do it. The goal is to encourage your dog to be more active. For more on [Blue Heeler exercise](#) see here.

The best exercise for an overweight dog should be comfortable for them. Avoid high impact or activities that require sudden changes in direction. Recommendations include –

- **Regular walks** (daily) at a pace and distance that is comfortable for them. Several shorter walks a day is better than trying to walk too far in one session.
- **Swimming or walking in water.** Water takes the weight off of their joints making the activity lower impact. Also, moving the limbs through the water provides resistance working their muscles. For more on [Blue Heeler swimming](#) see here.
- **Strength and muscles building exercises.** This will strengthen the muscle that supports their joints and tendons. Secondly, exercises that work the muscles, particularly the larger muscle groups are great for burning fat. This type of exercise tends to continue burning fat even while resting afterward. Thirdly, the more muscle mass they have the more calories they can consume to maintain. For [recommended muscle-building exercises for Blue Heelers](#) see here.

Maintenance once your Blue Heeler reaches their goal weight

Once your Blue Heeler has achieved its goal weight it is crucial to maintain it. By this time you will have a fairly accurate idea of how many calories your Blue Heeler needs for maintenance. Stick to this.

Continue to ensure that they are getting daily exercise and keep track of their weight. Now you will be able to have a much healthier and happier Heeler.