Open up about obesity

**Step 1: Weigh in on weight**

**You:** As we’ve talked about before, I’m concerned about Freddie’s weight gain.

**Client:** Well, she’s a house cat and she’s going to be fat.

**SAMPLE RESPONSE**

**You:** You’re absolutely right. Indoor cats have a higher incidence of weight problems and associated diseases such as diabetes than outdoor cats. And it’s too dangerous in our area for cats to live outside. I’m going to send you home with some information on feline health that I’d like you to look over when you have time. You may be surprised to learn how easy it can be to help Freddie lose weight and live longer.

Make your point politely, review the major health risks associated with obesity, and keep the emphasis on health and well-being. The key is to discuss the issue even in the face of resistance and not shut down or dismiss the client as “difficult.”

*Then offer the client handouts, “How can I tell if my pet is overweight?” “Tips for healthy weight loss in cats” or “Weight loss in dogs” as a good starting point. You can also find more handouts at dvm360.com/forms.*

**Write your team’s preferred response here:**

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

---

**Step 2: Reframe your phrasing**

Let’s face it. The “f” word—fat—can be off-putting to clients. They’ll likely be insulted if you use the term to describe their pets. The term chubby is another you’d better avoid. Take a minute to brainstorm common words and phrases that might be hurtful to clients:

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

So what words can you use? An honest approach is to describe the pet as overweight or obese, depending on the severity of the pet’s weight problem.

You also may consider using the term “inflammation.” Adipokines—signal proteins produced by fat tissue—cause or contribute to hundreds of harmful inflammatory processes throughout the body. Take a few minutes to record some words to explain the serious risks weight problems pose to pets:

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

---