

The Smart Pet Feeder

*A Proposal to Design and Build an Automated Pet Feeder Capable of Preventing
One Pet From Eating Another Pet's Food*

Submitted to Professor Salah Badjou

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by

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WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

ELMC 461-ELECTROMECHANICAL Design

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Introduction and Summary:

For this project we will design and build a prototype of an automated pet feeder which will be suitable for use by cats and small dogs. This product will be called the Smart Pet Feeder. This system will hold enough food for 5 feedings. In addition to the features typically found on such feeders, the Smart Pet Feeder will allow the pet owner to prevent one pet from eating food which belongs to another pet.

Pet care is a multi-billion dollar industry in the US and is the second fastest growing retail area. Americans have doubled their spending on pets in the last 10 years and are expected to continue to increase their spending for several more years to come. In spite of the plethora of pet care products on the market, there is no product which keeps one pet from eating another animal's food, even though this is a very common problem among pet owners. The Smart Petfeeder will give pet owners a solution to this problem, thereby improving the lives of both pets and the owners.

Problem Definition:

Most pet owners cannot stay home to feed their pet several times a day, yet they want their pet to be able to eat as needed throughout the day. One of the most common ways that pet owners try to solve this problem is by so-called free feeding, where a pet has food available all day and eats at will (1). The problem is that the pet owner has no control over how much the pet eats or which pet eats the food. Many households have more than one pet which is fed from a bowl on the floor. Among those households, it is a common occurrence that those pets cannot eat the same food for either medical or financial reasons. These reasons include:

- One pet is on a special diet, such as for diabetes or kitten food, but the other pets eat normal food
- One pet needs to eat less than the others for weight control reason
- There is a dog and a cat, and the cat wants to eat the dog food (or vice versa), which is not healthy
- One pet has to eat a special diet and, while it is not unhealthy for the other pets to eat this food, it is more expensive than normal food and so it is cost effective to restrict the consumption of this food to only the pet which needs it

However, there is no effective way of keeping one pet from eating another's food short of physically removing the pet from the forbidden food. This creates a problem for both the pet owner and the pet. The issue for the pet owner is that they now have to supervise the pet's meals to assure that each pet eats its own food, or feed the pets at the same time in different rooms. Either way, the owner's presence at home is required during meal times. The issue for the pet is that, since the food cannot be left out to be eaten at leisure, it is forced to eat in the amount of time the pet owner allows it, regardless of its own eating preferences.

In addition, having to supervise a pet's eating leads to reduced mobility on the owner's part. As the feeding requirements become more complex it gets more expensive to hire someone to look after one's pets for long periods of time, and even day-to-day care while not traveling can become restrictive. Many pet owners are faced with scheduled pet feedings which require them to get up at the same time every morning to give the pets breakfast and to be home at the same time every night to give them dinner. If a pet takes medication it becomes even more important that a schedule is kept and the pet owner is even more restricted. Add to that the requirement that the different pets not eat each other's food and it can leave the pet owner with a

demanding and, for some, unrealistic schedule. This type of feeding routine can also cause the pet stress since it knows that it will not be fed until the owner is home.

In short, the problems which pet owners face in feeding their pets are:

1. Making sure that each pet has access to a healthy amount of food throughout the day, regardless of the owner's schedule
2. Making sure that each pet eats only its own food

Literature Review / Background Research:

There are many different types of pet feeders on the market today attempting to solve the problem of making sure that each pet has access to a healthy amount of food throughout the day, regardless of the owner's schedule. These feeders range in price from under \$10 to \$500 and offer varying degrees of control to the pet owner.

The most basic pet feeder is a gravity feeder, which consists of a hopper full of food which falls into a bowl as the bowl is emptied by the pet (see Figure 1). This type of feeder is not meant to control portion sizes or access to the food.



Figure 1: Petmate Café Feeder (2)

The feeder in Figure 1 allows the pet owner to ensure that the pet has access to food throughout the day or for a longer period of time and that the food does not go stale from exposure to the air before the pet eats it, but does nothing to control the amount of food eaten by the pet or to keep one pet from eating another's food. This feeder is designed to be a hassle free form of free feeding. The user reviews for this type of feeder are positive for the most part, with the most common complaint being that the food hopper can be knocked off by the pet, creating a mess (see Appendix B).

The rest of the pet feeders on the market are designed to provide regular feedings to pets even when the owner is not home. The most common type is based on the same idea as a gravity feeder but goes one step further, providing specifically sized portions at preset times. These feeders are intended both for the vacationing owner and the busy owner who simply does not have time to be home to feed their pets regularly. These feeders range in price from \$50 to \$500. In the \$50 range, there is the Petmate Le Bistro Electronic Portion-Control Automatic Pet Feeder, shown below.



Figure 2: Petmate Le Bistro Electronic Portion-Control Automatic Pet Feeder (3), which retails for \$49.99

This pet feeder holds 4.5 pounds of food and can dispense portions from ¼ cup to 2 cups up to 3 times per day. The reviews for feeders such as this are positive for the most part (Amazon.com shows an average review for this feeder to be 4 stars out of a possible 5 based on 266 user reviews (3)). The most common complaints about this type of feeder is that the programming is very difficult and is lost when the batteries are removed, the electronic display does not work, the smallest portion of food is too large for some pets, and that the food gets jammed in the chute leaving the pet hungry (4).

One the other side of the price range is the Perfect Petfeeder Lux Model by Pillar Products which was introduced in July of 2007.



Figure 3: The Perfect Petfeeder (5)

This feeder holds up to 10 pounds of food, which it can dispense up to 6 times per day in portions as small as a few pieces of food or as large as several cups. Instead of relying on batteries, it runs on AC power from a typical wall outlet and has a battery backup in case of power outages. Among other features, it boasts a “paw safe design” which ensures that no pet will ever get to the food, easy programming, a level meter to let the owner know when the unit is low on food, and almost every component which touches food is dishwasher safe (6). The

drawback of this product is the price and the size. It retails for \$499 and weighs about 20 pounds when empty (6). It is a major investment in both money and space. All of the reviews available are positive, but that is expected since the only source of user reviews is the Perfect Petfeeder website. At this time, there are no reports which state how many of these feeders have been purchased.

The other, less common, type of feeder on the market right now is shaped like the ERGO 8 day feeder (see Figure 4). This type of feeder ranges in price from \$40 to \$200. The advantage of this type of feeder over the gravity-type feeders is that there is no chute to get clogged with food, and the owner does not need to rely on the feeder itself to measure how much food will be served, since the owner places the exact amount to be fed in each compartment.



Figure 4: The ERGO 8 day feeder (7)

The user ratings for this type of feeder are about the same as those for gravity type feeders, with the most common complaints being flimsy construction which allow the pet tear the feeder apart and to access all of the food, the use of floor space, frequent battery replacement, and the fact that, in most models, the lid rotates so that in order for the pet to eat from the back compartments it must stand on the feeder. One major advantage of this type of feeder is to the pet owner whose

pet must receive medication on a schedule, since the medicine can be mixed with the food and released at a programmed time. Another advantage is that there are less moving parts and therefore fewer things to break.

Interestingly, there is not a single product on the market which addresses the second problem pet owners face when feeding their pets, which is to keep one pet from eating another pet's food. A search of the internet shows countless questions posed to discussion boards and pet advice experts stating "How can I make my dog stop eating the cat's food?" or "How do I feed my fat cat less without my skinny cat losing weight?" The answers to the first question range from yelling "bad" to the dog when it eats the cat's food to moving the cat food to a place where the cat can get to it but the dog cannot reach (8). The advice given to multi-cat owners is to feed the cats separately, which makes the use of any of the feeders discussed above impossible.

It is our goal to create a new type of pet feeder which will solve both of the problems of providing food even when the owner is not home and preventing one pet from eating another pet's food. Based on the round type of feeder shown in Figure 4, our Smart Pet Feeder will hold enough food to feed an animal for several days. The bowl will rotate under the cover so that the food is always in the same location at feeding time. The food will be revealed at the time which the owner programs and will remain available for the pet to consume at its own pace. Our feeder will, however, go one step further and actually prevent any one pet from eating a forbidden food. This will also allow the pet owner to place medication in the feeder and be sure that the pet that needs the medicine is the only one that will get it.

The Need:

Research reveals that pet care is big business in the US. According to the American Pet Products Manufacturing Association (known as the APPMA), 63% of US households include a pet as of 2007 (that's over 162 million cats and dogs) (9). And, as Americans increasingly view their pets more as family members than possessions, the amount of money they are willing to spend on their care is steadily increasing. According to the APPMA, Americans spent \$41 billion on their pets in the year 2007 (9). This trend is relatively new (for example, in 1996 Americans spent only \$21 billion on their pets (10)), but it shows no sign of slowing down. After consumer electronics, pet care is the fastest growing industry in the US (11), and yearly spending is expected to reach \$52 billion by 2009 (11).

While the reasons for America's pet obsession may be debatable, its existence is not. Surprisingly, most of the money spent on pet care is not going toward veterinary bills; it's going to buy food, where \$16.1 billion was spent in 2007 (12). Clearly, Americans are as obsessed with their pets' diets as they are with their own. Unfortunately, 40% of America's pets are overweight (1). In cats, obesity is a leading cause of diabetes and urinary tract problems, and obese dogs are more likely to be injured and have more stress on their heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, and joints (14).

Our new Smart Pet Feeder will not be able to cure any of these ailments, but it will make it easier for the pet owner to administer the treatment recommended by their vet. It will make it possible to feed one cat a prescription food while letting the other eat a normal food, or to provide puppy food to the younger dogs while making sure that an older dog does not gain weight from eating it, since puppy food is higher in calories than regular dog food.

This project is perfect for the Electromechanical Design Class. It requires the integration of electrical, mechanical, and programming components. Also, it will force this team to become familiar with the technical design and production processes as well as the business aspects of project planning, scheduling, and cost analysis. As in the professional world, this product will be designed by a team to which each member brings a different set of strengths and skills.

Objectives:

Our objectives are to create a product which will:

1. Enable a pet owner to feed their pets at specific time of day without being physically present at feeding time
2. Allow a pet owner to feed a number of different pets different types of food without the possibility of one pet eating another pet's food

Functional Requirements:

The Smart Pet Feeder must:

1. Reliably provide food to a pet at the time the owner wishes
2. Be easily programmable by some one with no technical knowledge
3. Keep the pet from reaching the food stored for later feedings
4. Not allow an unauthorized pet to eat from a given feeder

The Workplan/Method:

The prototype must be complete and ready for exhibit by the last week of April. The preliminary schedule for the production of the Smart Petfeeder prototype is as follows:

1. Research: January 15 – January 30, 2008
2. Specify the components: January 30 – February 4, 2008

3. Create electrical schematic and model in PSPICE: February 4 – February 15, 2008
4. Order components: February 15 to be in hand by March 1, 2008
5. Machine parts: March 1 – March 7, 2008
6. Programming of microcontroller and assembly of electrical system: March 1 – April 1
7. Assembly of Prototype: April 1 – April 15

This schedule has the prototype completed two weeks before the demonstration, leaving enough time to cope with emergencies such as machining or electrical problems, components arriving later than expected, and redesigning as necessary.

The Qualifications:

This team is uniquely qualified to complete this project. All four members have successfully completed the first half of the Electromechanical Engineering program at the Wentworth Institute of Technology and have completed classes in computer programming, network theory, mechanics of materials, digital systems, and analog circuit design. In addition, every member of this group has successfully completed and built designs in the past several years, including speaker design, point of sale system designs, and microprocessor based stepper motor control designs. Also, the team has a strong support network to rely on in the form of professors, upper classmen, and contacts from previous and current jobs. For further details, please see the resumes in Appendix A.

The Budget:

Smart Pet Feeder										Jan 30 2008	
Deliverables		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prototype• Written Report• Oral Presentation									
BUDGET SUMMARY											
Description						Budget	Actual	Difference			
I. Staff						0.00	0.00	\$0.00			
II. Equipment & Components						247.50	0.00	\$247.50			
III. Administrative Costs						0.00	0.00	\$0.00			
IV. Contingency						100.00					
BUDGET SUB-TOTAL						347.50	0.00	\$247.50			
I. STAFF											
Position		Notes		Staff	Qty	Units	Rate	Budget	Actual	Difference	
Engineer		Rachel Heil		0	15	weeks	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Engineer		Kristine McCarthy		0	15	weeks	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Engineer		Filip Rege		0	15	weeks	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Engineer		Alexis Rodriguez-Carlson		0	15	weeks	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
STAFF Subtotal							0.00	0.00	\$0.00		
II. Equipment & Components											
Description		Notes			Qty	Units	Rate	Budget	Actual	Difference	
Stepper motor					1	motor	0.00	50.00	0.00	\$50.00	
Microcontroller					1	controller	0.00	50.00	0.00	\$50.00	
Darlington Array					1	array	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Cat Dish					5	dishes	0.00	1.00	0.00	\$1.00	
IR Transmitters					10	sensor	1.50	15.00	0.00	\$15.00	
IR Recievers					1	reciever	1.50	1.50	0.00	\$1.50	
Power supply					1	supply	20.00	20.00	0.00	\$20.00	
Keypad					1	keypad	10.00	10.00	0.00	\$10.00	
Digital Display					1	display	10.00	10.00	0.00	\$10.00	
Drive Shaft					1	shaft	10.00	10.00	0.00	\$10.00	
Ball Bearings					2	bearings	10.00	20.00	0.00	\$20.00	
Drive belt					1	belt	10.00	10.00	0.00	\$10.00	
Aluminum plate		12 x 12 x .25 inches			2	plate	25.00	50.00	0.00	\$50.00	
Equipment Subtotal							247.50	0.00	248		
III. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS											
Position		Notes			Qty	Units	Rate	Budget	Actual	Difference	
Rent					1	week	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Utilities					1	week	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Postage/Courier/Fedex					1	week	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Supplies					1	week	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Research Materials (Books/Magazines/CDs)					1	est	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
Miscellaneous expenses					1	flat	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	
ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS Subtotal							0.00	0.00	\$0.00		

The Project's Future:

The Smart Pet Feeder will enable a pet owner to prevent a pet from eating a specific food while still allowing access to that food by other pets. For this project, our goal is to develop a prototype which would be used for a cat or a small dog. Once this project is completed, there is the possibility of expanding on the design and/or improving on the design itself. For example, the feeder could come in different sizes for different animals. At a later time, the technology used to keep one pet from eating another's food could be used with gravity-type vacation feeders like the one seen in Figure 2. This could be accomplished as a senior design or in industry.

Bibliography:

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3. "Petmate Le Bistro Electronic Portion-Control Automatic Pet Feeder." Amazon.com. 25 Jan. 2008
<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000BVWVUA/ref=s9_asin_image_2?pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=center-2&pf_rd_r=0WDC23RF23M58AJ1CCJG&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=278240301&pf_rd_i=507846>.
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<http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B000BVWVUA/ref=dp_db_cm_cr_acr_txt?%5Fencoding=UTF8&showViewpoints=1>.
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Appendices:

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Appendix A: Resumes

Rachel Heil

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Boston, MA 02115
(802)338-0165
heilr@wit.edu

EDUCATION

Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, MA
Bachelor of Science in Electromechanical Engineering

Exp. May 2010

RELATED COURSES

Analog Circuit Design	Mechanics of Materials	C Programming
Digital Systems	Materials Science Engineering	Linear Algebra and Matrix Theory
Introduction to Nanotechnology	Thermodynamics	Differential Equations
Embedded Computer Systems	Engineering Fluids	Junior Electromechanical Design

Online Portfolio with more detail: <http://myweb.wit.edu/heilr>

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Extensive use of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access programs.
- Moderate Experience with AutoCAD, Solid Works, Agilent VEE, C, PSpice, and MATLAB.
- Introductory experience with Java, Logger Pro, and MathCAD.
- Laboratory experience working with digital multimeter, function generator, and oscilloscope instruments

DESIGN/LAB WORK

Speaker Design	WIT	March 2006
– Designed a speaker by creating coils, taking measurements, and using design skills acquired through class		
– Researched and brainstormed design ideas, created model of design, manipulated design, took measurements, created final design		
– Designed a speaker transmitter that worked within the guidelines along with receivers built by other groups		

Alternate Bike Brake Design	WIT	September 2005
– Re-designed the standard braking system of a bicycle for a person with minimal hand movement		
– Brainstormed and drew out ideas, planned out final design, gave final presentation on final product		
– Selected as the second best design by the class		

WORK EXPERIENCE

Engineering Matters®, Inc., Newton Upper Falls, MA
Electromechanical Intern

May - August 2007

- Worked full time for first optional co-op term
- Worked closely with engineers in design and test processes
- Learned from working hands on manufacturing and producing products to be shipped to customers
- Worked mostly in the electromechanical, power electronics, electromagnetic, and valve actuator fields

Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, MA
Desk Attendant

August 2007 – Present

- Help to keep the residence halls on campus safe from those who should not be entering the building
- Check in visitors who do not live in the building in order to keep track of who is in the building

HONORS AND ACTIVITIES

– Awarded Merit Award Scholarship	Fall 2005 – Present
– WIT Women's Center	Fall 2005 – Spring 2007
– Member of the Office of Student Leadership	Fall 2005 – Spring 2007
– Member of the Residential Housing Association for my dorm building	Fall 2006 – Spring 2007
– Secretary of the Wentworth Billiard's Club	Fall 2006 – Present
– Member of the Wentworth Events Board	Fall 2007 – Present
– Soar in Four, a four year leadership program/class	Spring 2007 – Present
– WIT Women's Leadership Conference	March 23 – 24 2007

Kristine McCarthy
4 Greenbrier Lane
Hyannis MA, 02601
508-280-2562
mccarthyk8@wit.edu

Education:

Wentworth Institute of Technology, 2010
Bachelor of Science in Electromechanical Engineering

Boston, MA

Courses:

- Introduction to Engineering
- Introduction to Engineering Design I
- Mechanics of Materials
- Engineering Thermodynamics
- Engineering Mathematics I
- Computer Aided Manufacture
- Engineering Statics
- Calculus I, II, III
- Engineering Fluids
- Applied Differential Equations I
- Linear Algebra and Matrix Theory
- Computer Science I Using C
- Materials Science
- Network Theory I, II
- Engineering Physics I, II
- Electromechanical Design I
- Introduction to Nanotechnology
- Digital Systems
- Chemistry I
- Embedded Computer Systems
- Analog Circuit Design

Engineering Skills

- Solidworks
- Microsoft Office applications
- PSpice
- Internet Explorer
- Unigraphics
- Photoshop
- MATLAB
- Agilent VEE
- Microcontrollers
- Benchman Software and Hardware
- CNC Lathes
- Bridgeport Vertical Milling Machines
- Mechanical Drawing

Professional Experience:

Company: American Properties Team,
Position: Lifeguard

June 2007 – September 2007

Duties: Supervision of patrons, monitoring chemical levels of pool, light maintenance and cleaning, first aid and life-saving training

Company: Cape Coastal Nursery,
Position: General help, customer service

May 2006 – September 2006

Duties: Customer service, machinery operation, accounting

Filip Rege

8 Barton Street • Somerville, MA • 02144
regef@wit.edu • (617) 230 0196

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, MA

June 2005 - present

BIOAUTOMATION SPECIALIST

Collaborate with a multidisciplinary technology and development group of engineers and biologists who design and build robust automated systems for a world renowned genomics lab.

- Upgrade, troubleshoot and modify existing automated systems to optimize lab operations.
- Identify and analyze automation needs; program instruments and systems.
- Coordinate testing of new systems with development staff and users; strategize and implement modifications utilizing SolidWorks 2003, MasterCAM and CNC machining.

Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, Boston, MA

January 2003 – May 2005

OPERATING ROOM EQUIPMENT TECHNICIAN

- In charge of maintaining, setting up and troubleshooting all surgical and diagnostics instruments including automated microscopes, ophthalmic and ENT lasers, and image guided surgery machines.
- Determine equipment required for procedure and adjust surgical schedule accordingly.
- Responsible for the surgical equipment of 17 operating rooms; assist surgeons with equipment.

Denis Wilson Partnership, s.r.o., Prague, Czech Republic

July 2000 – March 2002

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC DESIGN ENGINEER

Drafted designs in AutoCAD for leading British consulting firm specializing in commercial development related traffic and transportation planning.

- Responsible for designing detailed drafts to meet tight deadlines.
- Successfully drafted feasibility plans for traffic access and parking facilities of large-scale shopping complexes to win new customer business.
- Incorporated results of traffic and parking demand surveys into design.
- Developed plans in support of planning and building permits.
- IT responsibilities for the computer network including purchasing equipment, software updates, virus protection and general system management.
- Initiated and implemented consolidation plan for sharing and archiving files improving project productivity; mentored new employees on AutoCAD tools.

VPU DECO Praha, a.s., Prague, Czech Republic

1997 - 2000

BRIDGE DESIGN ENGINEER

Worked for one of the most prestigious traffic and civil engineering firms in the Czech Republic. Drafted designs in AutoCAD for detailed projects of over water, roadway and railway bridges.

- Directly responsible for design of bridge sections; coordinated interfaces for complex projects.
- Analyzed rough engineering sketches, notes and government issued standards to determine optimal solutions; discovered and resolved design conflicts.
- Developed detailed design for steel reinforced concrete structures.
- Evaluated and recommended CAD tools for design of steel reinforcement.

EDUCATION

Secondary School of Civil Engineering, Prague, Czech Republic

1992 – 1997

(Equivalent to an American Associates Degree in Engineering)

Graduated with honors in Civil and Structural Engineering, Drafting, Construction Materials and English.

SKILLS

Software: AutoCAD, SolidWorks, MasterCAM, MS Office, Agilent VEE, PSpice.

Other: CNC machining.

Languages: Fluent in English (Computer Based TOEFL: 270).

IMMIGRATION STATUS: Permanent U.S. resident with permission to work

Alexis Rodriguez-Carlson

143 Watertown Street Apt. 2 Watertown, MA 02472
617-359-9019 rodriguezcarls@wit.edu
<http://myweb.wit.edu/rodriguezcarls/index.htm>

EDUCATION

WENTWORTH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Boston, MA

- Bachelor of Science: Electromechanical Engineering – Expected June 2010
 - GPA: 3.558
 - Dean's List: Fall 2005, Spring 2006, Fall 2006, Fall 2007

THE UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI COLLEGE-CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Cincinnati, OH

- Master of Fine Arts: Sound Design for Live Theatre – June 2001

THE COLORADO COLLEGE

Colorado Springs, CO

- Bachelor of Arts: Technical Theatre – May 1998

COURSEWORK

- Applied Robotics
- Embedded Computer Systems
- Mechanics of Materials
- Network Theory (DC and AC)
- Analog Circuit Design
- Computer Programming in C++
- Engineering Thermodynamics
- Digital Systems (Logic Design and Microcontrollers)
- Engineering Fluids

DESIGN AND LABORATORY WORK

- Currently designing a microcontroller-based automated pet feeder which will be capable of preventing one pet from eating another pet's food
- Successfully designed and built a system to control a step-motor using the Motorola HCS12 microcontroller
- Designed a self-calibrating point-of-sale system using a strain gage which allowed the user to sell various goods by weight with flexible pricing options and receipt printing
- Designed a remote system (to be disguised as a rock) to measure the weight of birds in the wild

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- **Engineering:** Computer aided circuit analysis, analog and digital circuit design and testing, stress and flexure testing
- **Devices:** Signal generator, digital multimeter, Simpson meter, oscilloscope, microcontrollers, hydraulic testing machine, hydrometer, viscosimeter, calipers, various other electrical and mechanical sensors
- **Software and Languages:** PSpice, C++, BUFFALO, Agilent VEE, AutoCAD 2000-2007, basic SolidWorks, basic MATLAB, MS Office Suite including Excel

ENGINEERING EXPERIENCE

SEI COMPANIES

Electrical Engineering Co-op

May 2007 – August 2007

- Using AutoCAD 2007, created and edited electrical drawings such as floor plans, riser diagrams, and sketches for buildings in all stages of construction or renovation
- Coordinated with other departments to provide appropriate power to HVAC and plumbing equipment
- Performed research as requested by engineers on topics such as photovoltaic arrays, contactors, and variable frequency drives, as well as power requirements for laboratory equipment
- Attended training sessions on topics such as VESDA and other fire protection systems, emergency generators, and grounding and bonding
- Edited the Master Specifications for the Electrical Department for spelling and grammar errors, clarity, consistency, and technical correctness
- Created a Microsoft Excel-based system to plan the number of hours each staff person would work for each engineer in a week. Each engineer entered the number of hours they required of each staff person on an individual spreadsheet and this information was automatically transferred to a master spreadsheet, which the department coordinator used to distribute the work load evenly

Alexis Rodriguez-Carlson

143 Watertown Street Apt. 2 Watertown, MA 02472
617-359-9019 rodriguezcarls@wit.edu
<http://myweb.wit.edu/rodriguezcarls/index.htm>

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

HARVARD UNIVERSITY MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY SERVICES – Cambridge, MA

Media and Technology Technician

September 2005 – Present

- Work 10-20 hours during the school year in order to help finance education
- Provide technical support for classes, conferences, and special events, including sound and video system design and set up, computer and projection support, and video and audio recording
- Interact with professors, students, guest speakers, and technicians to ensure the smooth execution of events
- Troubleshoot, repair, or replace onsite equipment within a strict time frame

AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATRE AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY – Cambridge, MA

Production Sound Engineer

February 2002 – August 2005

- Assisted in the day-to-day running of the sound department, including making recommendations for equipment purchases and rentals
- Supervised crews during setups and teardowns of shows
- Aided in the design and implementation of sound reinforcement, computer, and intercom systems for all productions, including diagnosing problems and performing repairs on cables and equipment
- Drafted system diagrams in AutoCAD

THE BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL – Stockbridge, MA

Sound Master

June 2001 – September 2001

- Managed the sound department, and supervised two interns
- Supervised the load-ins and strikes of sound, intercom, monitoring, and video equipment for all shows
- Acted as a liaison between guest sound designers and management
- Coordinated the necessary equipment rentals, purchases, and repairs
- Generated AutoCAD drawings detailing the signal flow and setup of equipment for each show

REFERENCES:

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Mike Tomei
Technical Supervisor
Harvard University
Media and Technology Services
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mtomei@fas.harvard.edu

David Remedios
Resident Sound Designer
American Repertory Theatre
617-496-2000 x8862
daremedios@rcn.com

Appendix B: Workplan Details

Goal of Project:

1. Create a Prototype of the Smart Petfeeder Which:
 - a. Can be used for cats or small dogs
 - b. Which holds 2 days of food at 3 feedings per day
 - c. Has 5-7 cups
 - d. Has a maximum diameter of 12"
 - e. Is not battery operated
 - f. Battery backup
 - g. Has food dishes which are dishwasher safe
 - h. Is robust enough that a pet cannot get to the food stored for later feedings

Milestones:

1. Get project approved by Professor Badjou
2. Determine size and shape of the feeder
 - a. Bowl size
 - b. Overall size
 - c. Where is the power supply going
 - d. Where is the LCD readout going
 - e. What kind of interface for the user
 - f. Where the microcontroller is going
3. Determine what components to use
 - a. Determine what type of microcontroller to use
 - i. Keep a clock
 - ii. Accept inputs from a key pad

- iii. Output to a display
 - iv. Control a motor via a Darlington Array
 - b. Determine what type of motor to use
 - c. Determine what type of sensors
- 4. Create the electrical schematic to power the components
- 5. Machine all of the machined parts
- 6. Put the physical and electrical components together
- 7. Complete programming
 - a. Programming milestones
 - i. To run a clock
 - ii. Control a motor
 - iii. To accept an input from a keypad
 - iv. To do all of the above together in a predictable and consistent way

Material and Financial Resources:

- 1. Each team member will contribute \$100 for a total of \$400
- 2. Filip has access to a machine shop at his place of work

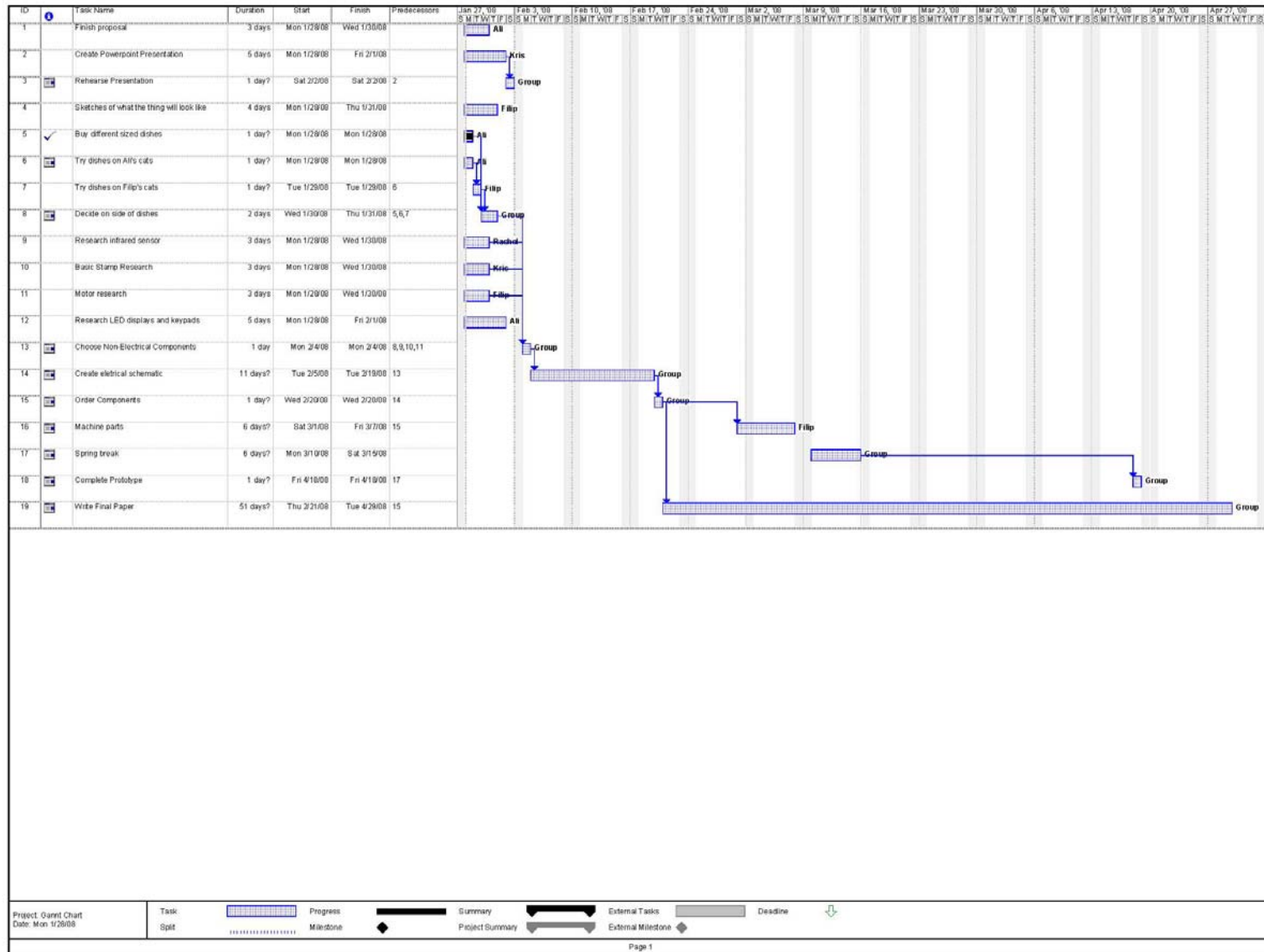
Intellectual Resources:

- 1. Professors
- 2. Library
- 3. Internet
- 4. Upper Classmen
- 5. Contacts from current jobs and previous coops

Target Dates:

1. Order all parts by Feb 15
2. All parts in hand by March 1
3. Prototype assembled by April 18
4. Final paper completed by April 28

Preliminary Gantt Chart:



Meeting times:

1. Mondays from 8-10 and 1-3
2. Wednesday from 8-10

Attendance Rules:

1. All group members must be present at all meetings.
2. The only acceptable reason for missing a meeting is one which would be acceptable for missing an exam
3. If a member is going to be absent or late they will notify other members via text message, email, or phone call

Mechanisms for Resolving Conflict:

1. Problems will be solved with discussion
2. If no consensus can be met, a vote will be held
3. If the vote results in a tie, the group will seek mediation from a professor

Ali will Maintain the Project File:

1. All documents will be named in this form: Name of file YYYYMMDD

Status Collection:

1. At the end of each meeting, each group member will be given a task to complete
2. The status these tasks will be collected at the next meeting
3. Ali will keep a running Gantt Chart where progress will be tracked

Appendix C: Existing Product Descriptions and Reviews

[illegible][illegible]

http://www.amazon.com/8-Day-Auto-Pet-Feeder/dp/B0008173UQ/ref=pd_bbs_sr_9?ie=UTF8 1/22/2008

Amazon.com: 8 Day Auto Pet Feeder: Home & Garden

[illegible]

http://www.amazon.com/8-Day-Auto-Pet-Feeder/dp/B0008173UO/ref=pd_bbs_sr_9?ie=UTF-8&qid=11222008

[illegible]



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Amazon.com: Customer Reviews: 8 Day Auto Pet Feeder

[illegible]

http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B0008173UO/ref_cm_cr_dp_all_summary%5F... 1/22/2008

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

***** Excellent Choice, December 19, 2007

By [Terry C. McDannally](#) (Norris, AL USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

I'm very satisfied with the use and operation of the product. It works beautifully, however, there are some inaccuracies in the pipework... but nothing major.

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful

***** Works great for cats, August 3, 2007

By [C. Hicks](#) (Silver Spring, MD) - [See all my reviews](#)

I've been using my engo petfeeder for two years now and I'm not sure what I would do without it. Our cats would wake up early and eat their food each day for her food and know any time we were in the kitchen. Since we bought this and started using it for her feedings twice a day, she no longer associates us with the sound of food. This means we get to sleep in :) and no more meowing in the kitchen.



To address a few issues:

- 1) I did have minor issues on my first feeder, but engo replaced it and it has been working perfectly since.
- 2) My cat tried to get into the feeder the first night, but once she realized she couldn't, she hasn't tried since. I have a fairly normal sized 10 lb cat.
- 3) If the recorded voice is getting static-y or the compartment isn't turning fully - it's time to change the batteries.
- 4) If the feeder didn't go off at the appointed time, it's most likely that it's not in "autofeed" mode.

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

4 of 6 people found the following review helpful

***** I love this pet feeder!!!, July 24, 2007

By [Robbyn](#) (Denville, CA) - [See all my reviews](#)

We were going out of town, and wanted to leave our cat at home. I read the reviews, and was concerned about this feeder, because many of the reviews said it was flimsy and had a cover that could be easily pulled off by even an old, sick animal. However, I decided to give it a try, because it seemed to be one of the only feeders that could be programmed to open at certain times, as opposed to certain intervals, and it had some compartments that any other feeder on the market. The feeder arrived with a new feature, which is that it now has a very secure screw to hold the cover in place. The feeder is quite sturdy and well-made in my opinion. I love that it has a voice recorder, so when it opens to the next compartment, my cat hears my husband's voice calling "Willow" - food, Kitty, Kitty. It has a lot packed underneath, so you can use canned food if you're only going to be gone for a day, or dry food if you're going to be gone for several days. What an great invention!!

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful

***** Not Dependable. Don't buy., May 14, 2007

http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B0008173UQ/ref_cm_cr_dp_all_summary%95F... 1/22/2008

continuous use.

Bottom line: For a short-term solution to feeding an older cat while away on a long weekend, it does its job. People looking for something more might want to look into a reliable pet-deter.

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful

***** Our elderly sick dog was able to nip off the top of feeder!, November 3, 2006

By [Cathleen Hughes](#) - [See all my reviews](#)

I was going on vacation for a week and rather than take our dog to the kennel, we chose to try the vacation feeder so it could dispense his daily dose of medication. He takes several meds daily, including thyroid. The auto feeder seemed like it would work out really well for him. We tried it out before we left to make sure he would eat from it. It seemed to work out fine. When we got back from vacation, he had torn off the lid and ate all his meds. We weren't sure which day he tore it off and don't know how many doses he ate at once. (There were teeth marks on the lid where he pried it off). The thing that annoyed us was that this is an elderly dog who has a serious medical problem, as well as arthritis, and he was able to tear the feeder apart. We are wondering what a young healthy dog would be able to do to the feeder! I think the problem is that the feeder is made out of plastic. Metal would probably have been a better choice!

We are hoping to be able to return the feeder due to poor design.

Cathleen Hughes

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful

***** Worked for a month, September 30, 2006

By [S. Thompson](#) (San Francisco Bay Area, CA, USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

This thing is poorly constructed and the electronics are lousy. It did not hold up to minimal use. We set it off the 8 programs so it would feed 6 times per day.

After a few weeks, the electronics started to fry: the recorded voice sounded full of static and the tray would not turn fully to the next portion, leaving our cat hungry. If you can't rely on it to feed your cat every time, it's not worth having!

The plastic top has a round center that "snaps on" and is the "handle" for the top. This fell off and would not snap on again.

As far as usability, the top rotates around 8 "bowls" instead of the bowls rotating underneath, which means the "feeding bowl" is constantly moving. If you want to put this in a corner, the "feeding bowl" will sometimes be facing out, and sometimes be nearly inaccessible. This means the animal has to move aside this necessary because it can't be tucked away, it has to be accessible from all sides.

I am thoroughly disappointed. I am trying one other product like this from a different manufacturer, via my neighbor, where the bowl rotates instead of the top. If that doesn't work out, I'm going back to a plain dish and manual feeding.

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B0008173UQ/ref_cm_cr_dp_all_summary%95F... 1/22/2008

By [Y. CHANG](#) - [See all my reviews](#)

I bought this feeder a few days before my weeklong trip. Setting it up was easy, and I noticed that the feeder had to be placed in the middle of the kitchen floor - otherwise my cat won't be able to get to the food without climbing across the feeder. A tolerable flaw, I thought.

To test it, I set the feeder timer to open at 7AM and went to bed. I even recorded my voice. After I didn't hear anything at 7, I went to check the feeder at 7:30. The feeder cover hasn't opened, and the clock was indicating 7:03AM! I set the clock before midnight, and after 8 hours, the feeder clock only moved 2 hours!

The battery indicator showed the power was okay, but the clock's "second" indicator was moving once in every 3 seconds. If I didn't test-run, my cat would have been fed every 3 days instead of everyday!

I immediately called ENGOSYS customer service, and for three different attempts at three different times of the day, they put me on extended wait and I couldn't even get a human on the phone. Bad customer service.

I absolutely do not recommend the product. If you really need to buy an Engo product, buy from a dependable retailer who has better customer service.

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful

***** They didn't think that a cat might try to get at the feeder!, April 18, 2007

By [Marcanilla Olvera "Marcanilla"](#) (Florida) - [See all my reviews](#)

The product is a joke. While it might seem hard to believe, there is absolutely nothing to kick the turning lid on to the motor. Nothing jammed in or stuck in its place. The lid twists on to the middle part, and once you access the timer, the motor bounces a couple of times the "wait/cover" sides up. So when I presented it to my cat for the first time he smelled food to the left compartment (yet there was no bag of food for the smell to come through) and promptly pushed the lid to the left exposing half of the compartment with food in it and started to paw it out. Realize that it is the lid that moves, giving the pet leverage to push it off as well as making it impossible to access in a corner. Even the motor has some give to it, you can push the lid to the right (which would open the lid in the groove) but it still moves a good inch, which even if the pet can't get the food it should at least infuriate him! It's not even possible they tested this product with real animals!

Help other customers find this most helpful review

Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful

***** Not as bad as people say..., March 12, 2007

By [dibacardo "dibacardo"](#) (Tallahassee, FL) - [See all my reviews](#)

We bought this feeder for our elderly cat that needs medication twice a day (sprinkled on top of food). We were going away for a long weekend and thought it would be a good way to administer medications without bothering our cat when we come to our house twice daily (4AM). The product is NOT sturdy, it's me. Any dog or large, strong cat that REALLY wants the food inside will be able to rip the top off and get inside. However, it's easy to set up, the timer is reliable and fully customizable to go off at any time of day, and the audio recording feature (while admittedly gimmicky) is kinda sweet. We filled the idea of being able to call our cat even when we aren't home. Some folks have also been kind hands on the feeder because it's a battery suck. It runs off of 3 AA batteries (the poorly copy-edited/truncated? instruction book calls for AAA's...), so yes, it is not meant for long-term,

http://www.amazon.com/review/product/B0008173UQ/ref_cm_cr_dp_all_summary%95F... 1/22/2008

9 of 11 people found the following review helpful

***** Best Feeder ever!, July 8, 2006

By [Kathleen McKeown "Katie"](#) (Franklin, MA) - [See all my reviews](#)

My cat tends to gobble down all the food if I give her a lot of food at one time. With the Engo System feeder I can feed her every three hours if I want or once a day for 8 days. It is great! My voice recorded message comes on and calls her and the compartment opens to the next feeding. She is never worried she won't get fed if I get home late. It is better for my cat to eat small frequent meals rather than overeating once or twice a day. It would be great for diabetic pets or pets needing medication on a regular basis as well. It is wonderful if you can't be home at a set time each day. Pets love to know they will get their food on schedule even if you are not there. It must be battered so you can put it anywhere. I gave 4 stars because the programming of the timer is not so user-friendly as it could be. It uses any time (Example: 12:00 or 1PM and 15:00 or 3PM). I have mine set for every 3 hours but you can program it anyway you want. It reduces anxiety for your pet when he/she knows the food is coming. My cat tried to push the door open but she couldn't so she knows the schedule and just waits for it to open now.

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15 of 15 people found the following review helpful:

********* Poorly Designed, June 10, 2006

By **zicowadd2 "Greg"** (Los Angeles, CA) - [See all my reviews](#)

This product is poorly designed. My cat can push the cover and access the food very easily. And this is a really stupid cat! Don't waste your money.

Why can't someone design an automatic pet feeder that works? I've tried three types and read lots of reviews. None of them work.


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[illegible]

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[illegible]

http://www.amazon.com/Pet-Dish-6-Days/dp/B00062OTWM/ref=pd_hf_p_13 1/22/2008

batch it screwed in with a small Phillips head screw that I've learned to keep a special small head Phillips screw driver with the cat food to ensure that I can get the thing open. Getting the battery to make good contact is sometimes a challenge but so far I've always succeeded. I've considered getting a second unit and setting both to open at 24 hr intervals... 12 hours apart from each other. Then I really could go 6 days without having to fill it but then as my cat has convinced me I'm a bit boy!

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful:

******* Not designed for wet food, July 2, 2007**

By **Dave** (New Jersey) - [See all my reviews](#)

I'll give this product 3 stars for the concept and the fact that it works great on a day to day basis. If you leave for the day and know you won't be home in time to feed your cat at night, this is great. BUT... there is no way that you will be leaving wet food inside this machine for longer than a few hours. The ice packs melt and the compartments don't keep the air out. Any wet food kept inside for longer than 6-7 hours will go bad. I have no idea why they call it a 6-day feeder, maybe for dry food. If you left wet food in it for 6 days, it would be a fascinating disgusting mess for your cat to eat by day 7.

I like it for evening feedings if I won't make it home, but overall it's slightly disappointing. I would never go on vacation and trust this thing for a weekend.

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Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful:

******* Useful for short vacations, May 12, 2007**

By **K. Conner** (California, USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

Works well for long weekend trips. Only holds enough food for a small animal.

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews
Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful:

******* WORLD'S BEST INVENTION!!!, February 18, 2007**

By **M. Mattias** (Coford, OH) - [See all my reviews](#)

We have had our automatic feeder for over a year now and it is the reason we are able to happily co-exist with our always-hungry cat. The feeder is consistent and we have only changed the battery twice since it was purchased. This product takes a lot of abuse from our cat who thinks on it, paws at it, knocks it, drops on it, and occasionally tries to tip it into giving him more food! I can't say enough good things about this product. We have been able to keep our first cat on his diet, allowed him to reach a healthy weight for him (14 lbs (down from 18 lbs)) and impressing our veterinarian! On occasion we have company over who can hear the mechanism turn in the motor, but my husband and I never notice the lid move until we see our cat running as fast as he can towards the kitchen... he obviously hears well! The feeder allows our cat to associate food with the feeder, so he doesn't bother us at midnight or 3am to be fed anymore (unless we forget to refill the food cups... making a very embarrassing IDIY). The top is easy to remove and replace, and we have used the feeder several times to take weekend trips without worrying about who will feed the cat while we are away. This is by far the best pet purchase I have ever made.

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14 of 16 people found the following review helpful:

******* Is anyone aware of a better unit?, November 21, 2005**
By **A. Amazon Reviewer** (Seattle, WA USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

I bought 2 of these for my cats, and they worked fine for a while. It's a smart design, but they've got many flaws.

They use a LOT of batteries. The 6 volts die after 2-3 weeks (so you have to keep a "spare" eye on it), and they run very slowly because of the weak, poorly designed motor. They both died within about 6 months, and I had to replace them.

Also, it's not really a 6-day unit - it's a 6 "meal" unit. Each tray only holds up to 1/2 cup. Since my cats (normal size) eat 1/3 cup per meal, I must set the unit to go off twice a day. I can't imagine this working for a large dog, and, since the food compartment is perpetually open, you can only set it for 2 1/2 days in advance. Not much help for vacations.

The person who said their unit has been working for 8 years is either mistaken or lying. This Amazon company is barely 3 years old. I have a sinking suspicion that the seller wrote a review of their own product, using their "imaginary" & hyperbole.

If anyone knows of a better system, please let us know or post a review.

Help other customers find the most helpful reviews
Was this review helpful to you? [Yes](#) [No](#) [Comment](#)

7 of 10 people found the following review helpful:

******* Hassle-free and reliable., September 25, 2005**
By **E. Skille "Feed-master"** (Milwaukee, WI) - [See all my reviews](#)

This feeder works as advertised. Put the food in and switch it to the time period desired. We tested first before leaving the cats alone for the weekend, but it still made us nervous the first time we used it. Being gone for four days there was no way to check if the feeder was working.

But, we've used it for two different weekends, and it worked flawlessly both times. My only suggestion for improvement would be to make the unit versatile. Put in a phone jack and a computer chip, then you could plug it into an extra phone line when you leave home, and call the unit to see which compartment it is on. That would be peace of mind, without having to ask

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1 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

******* No hassle feeding, January 11, 2007**
By **Lara Martinson "Mamma teacher"** (Minneapolis, MN) - [See all my reviews](#)

I finally bought this feeder so that when we're out of town, Neko (our cat) doesn't choke down all her food the first day we're gone. I was pleasantly surprised to find some food left in each section upon our return from the weekend away.

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1 of 3 people found the following review helpful:

******* You can lead a cat to..., November 9, 2005**
By **S.K. Dillon** (Brooklyn, NY USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

The dish is fine - works as advertised & is cleverly designed & operates quietly. The problem is my genetic cat who couldn't even be tempted to eat from the open tray, never mind once the mechanism was in place. He'll sit & go through periods of waiting to eat every 3 hours, day or night - a bit rough on those of us who'd like an uninterrupted sleep. So I thought I'd try the auto-feeder. Oh. Well.

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10 of 12 people found the following review helpful:

******* The worst product EVER if you want your pet to wait to eat all the food you left, December 29, 2005**
By **Michelle Ford** (St. Paul, MN USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

My stupid (I mean it, not smart) cat managed to pry this thing apart and get to the food within minutes. I do not recommend this product to anyone who hopes to spread out their animal's food over the course of a week. If you don't mind allowing your pet to eat all the food on the first day and suffer through the rest of the week starving, however, then go for it.

AWFUL REP OFF

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Anyone to enter your home and check on your pets.

Now, the 6-day label is slightly misleading. Because there are 6 compartments, one of them is always exposed, leading to pet access. It would be more accurate to call it a 5 day, but that's only trivial.

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68 of 69 people found the following review helpful:

******* Drains battery too fast, and moves too slowly, June 21, 2005**
By **P. Smith** (Washington, D.C.) - [See all my reviews](#)

I bought one about 6 months ago, for the same problem as the other reviewer--my cat would pester me at 5:30am. At first, it seemed like a godsend, but I quickly found some major issues with it, and now it's broken. My issues:

- 1) The 9v battery lasted only about 2-3 weeks, which gets pricey after awhile to keep changing.
- 2) I had to time my refills of it with the next scheduled feeding (every 6 hrs for my cat), or else his schedule would be thrown off. There was no way to "set" feeding times. It resets itself every time you refill it. So for example, if I was leaving for the weekend at 2pm, and I normally fed my cat at dawn and 12am/pm, then I had to make sure I cleaned/refilled the feeder precisely at 12pm, or else it would get off-cycle. Perhaps not a big deal for most, but it was frustrating for me to make sure I was home at 12pm or 6pm so I could get it to his schedule. I thought this was supposed to make my life easier; I found I often had to overfeed him, or let him go longer than 6 hours without a meal in order to coordinate times.
- 3) 14 times when I couldn't coordinate the feeder refill to my cat's schedule, and set it for whenever I could, when I got back from being away, there was no way to tell if he had eaten recently or not. My cat certainly wasn't telling me he was full. So I probably ended up overfeeding him at times because he is a master manipulator, and I couldn't tell if he was really hungry or just begging! (I started making one side of the feeder as TOP, then I'd have to count the number of times it rolled to see when he last ate.
- 4) On that same note, the feeder doesn't know when it's full or not, so if it's turned on, it just keeps refilling until the battery runs out. I once forgot to refill it, and it kept refilling, empty. My cat ended up chewing it to try to get to a full food compartment. Poor kitty! Bad man!
- 5) The dial turns VERY slowly, as it is also automated, drawing on that same 9v battery, which is why it drains so fast. My cat waits for the feeder to kick in, so as soon as it starts, he's got his head stuffed into the compartment, and he inadvertently (or purposely!) pushes the lid along, which I think caused it to break.

For me, there were too many factors making it not worth replacing. I ended up spending more at PetSmart on another feeder (CSO Auto Pet Feeder) which only does 5 meals, but it runs on 1 AA battery, and you can "set" the timer anytime you want. Only the timer draws power. The rest of it is a simple hinge mechanism, so it swings very fast, & QUIET (unlike the first feeder, which is loud), and isn't dependent on what time of day you refill it. One other feature is that it has a built-in timing valve, so when the feeder is empty, it knows, and it won't keep refilling. To refill it, I have to reset the clock, then turn the lid back around until some simple hinge mechanism is in the opposite direction. IT'S REALLY easy to reset, but what's good is that if I forget to refill it, it doesn't burst my cat with an empty bowl by continuing to rotate.

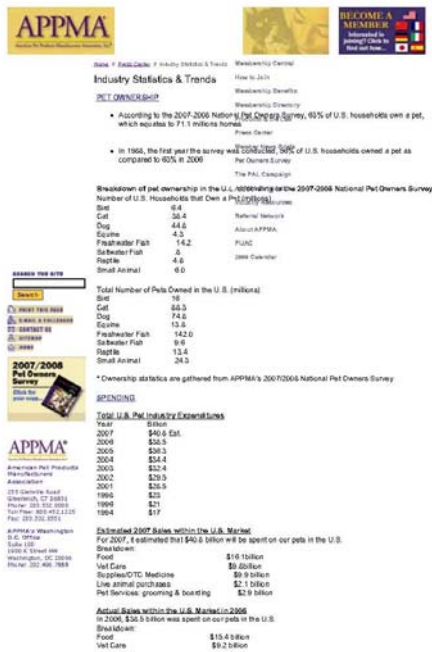
It also has a battery-life counter so you can see when your battery needs replacing, as well as a cover for the timer mechanism so your cat won't bump it or otherwise damage it.

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Appendix D: Pet Economy


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and features, enhanced reptile terrarium lighting systems and touch-activated toys help pet-owners take care of companion animals with ease and precision.

Lookin' Up

As pet owners meditate in yoga class, cats relieve stress by napping in a dog gym or relaxing in a feline spa before enjoying heated catbeds in a hot tub. Dogs sip fresh water from flowing fountains after a scolding run with a doggie massage.

Help Yourself

Products designed with convenience in mind lead this trend. Programmable feeding and drinking systems, automatic and battery-operated toys, self-cleaning litter boxes and self-warming pet mats let pets virtually care for themselves.

Straight from the Catwalk

Faux fur coats, hipster lumberjack vests, designer staid jackets, matching jeweled and leather collar and leash sets, Halloween costumes, and holiday collars keep pets in fashion throughout the year. Upscale leather carriers complete with a cell phone and water bottle holder are the perfect accessories to keep the pet owner in style as well.

Keep on Truckin'

Whether it's a quick trip to the supermarket or a long ride to the beach, companion animals are now traveling in style too. Buckled up in a harness, seat belt system or a portable carrier, these pets stay safe and secure while on the road. Food and water along with safety supplies are on hand in all-in-one kits, waste disposal systems make for easy clean-up on quick stops and motion sickness aids are available too.

Help, My Name Is...

Farm-to-table feeders and personalized food and water bowls to display collar tags and hard-made leashes, owners embrace their pets as true members of the American family celebrating their furry, feline and feathered companions with their very own belongings.

HEALTH BENEFITS

- **Pets Help to Lower Blood Pressure:** A recent study at the State University of New York at Buffalo found that people with hypertension who adopted a cat or dog had lower blood pressure readings in stressful situations than did those who did not own a pet. (Dr. Karen Allen, State University of New York at Buffalo)
- **Pets Help to Reduce Stress:** Working with a pet helps to soothe nerves and offers instant relaxation. Studies conducted worldwide have shown that the impact of a stressful situation is lesser on pet owners, especially women, than on those who do not own a pet. (Linda Smith, M.D., Wabash Center for Pet Nutrition, United Kingdom)
- **Pets Help to Prevent Heart Disease:** Because pets provide people with faithful companionship, research shows they may also provide their owners with greater psychological stability, thus a measure of protection from heart disease. (National Institute of Health Technology Assessment Workshop: Health Benefits of Pets)
- **Pets Help to Lower Health Care Costs:** People with pets actually make fewer doctor visits, especially for non-serious medical conditions. (National Institute of Health Technology Assessment Workshop: Health Benefits of Pets)
- **Pets Help to Fight Depression:** Pets help "open" depression and sometimes, promoting an interest in life. When services face adversity or trauma, affection from pets takes on great meaning. Their bonding behavior can foster a sense of security. (Between Pets and People: The Importance of Animal Companionship)

APPMA 2007-2008 National Pet Owners Survey

APPMA 2007-2008 National Pet Owners Survey

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Supplies/OTC Medicine	\$9.9 billion
Line animal purchases	\$2.1 billion
Pet Services, grooming & boarding	\$2.8 billion

* Unless otherwise stated, spending statistics are gathered by APPMA from various market research sources and are not included in the organization's bi-annual National Pet Owners Survey.

• According to the 2007-2008 APPMA National Pet Owners Survey, basic annual expenses for dog and cat owners in dollars include:

	Dogs	Cats
Surgical Vet Visits	453	303
Food	217	188
Kennel Boarding	225	149
Rescue Vet	279	175
Grooming/Cleaning Aids	127	16
Vetamins	17	37
Toys	66	40
Other	41	28

*Note: APPMA does not ask survey participants how much in total they spend on their dog or cat annually. The expenses listed above are not an inclusive and each category was asked separately of the survey participants.

2007 PET PRODUCTS TRENDS REPORT

We pamper them. We bring them wherever we go. We surprise them with something new on special occasions. They even get holiday presents. They are our pets!

From high-end items to high-tech items, products for our companion animals now extend beyond traditional necessities. The American Pet Product Manufacturers Association (APPMA) presents top pet product trends for 2007.

Going to the Dogs

More and more companies traditionally known for human products are going to the dogs, and cats, and reptiles. Big name companies including L'Oréal, Coty, Estée Lauder, Origins, Huggies, and Old Navy are now offering lines of pet products ranging from dog shampoo, pet attire, and named-brand toys to gourmet treats and food.

Pets Welcome

Many hotels across the country are adopting pet-friendly policies. Several chains have announced new pet-friendly policies that include everything from covered pet showers, plush doggie robes, to check-in gift packages that include a pet toy, dog treat, ID tag, bone and fun-does treat. Some even have a loaned dog massage on staff.

Pet Products Get New

Shopping for pet products is becoming easier than ever with an increasing array of retail outlets now selling pet products. Right along with fertilizer and shovels, shoppers can now find pet products such as doggie doors and yellow lawn spot removers sold at many lawn and garden stores, nurseries, and major home improvement stores including Home Depot.

The Lap of Luxury

High-end items to spoil companion animals are must-haves for pet owners that spare no expense to pamper their furry, feathered and finned loved ones. Items include faux fur coats for cold weather outings, Northern French day beds for afternoon naps, designer bird cages, botanical fragrances and top-end catnip, a Christmas tree!

Ultra-Clean...

Pet-owners take grooming one step beyond a haircut, a quick bath and a nail trim. Mouthwash and an electric toothbrush for canines are routine steps in a beauty regimen for some pooches. Biotin capsules daily products with special cage patches, while others enjoy man-cube complete with nail polish. Pet owners home stay cleaner with automatic, self-flushing litter boxes, cleaning cloths for muddy paws that mimic traditional baby wipes, and scented gel air fresheners to keep rooms free of pet odors.

Dinner is Served

Today's pet foods include complete and balanced diets that fortify our pet's body build and satisfy their tummies. Formulas for puppies and kittens, specialized meals for reptiles, birds and fish and diets for senior pets ensure a long and healthy life for our beloved companions.

State-of-the-Art

High-tech products including computerized identification tags, digital aquarium kits, automatic doors

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AUGUST 6, 2007

COVER STORY
By **Debra Branda** and **Christopher Palmer**

The Pet Economy

Americans spend an astonishing \$41 billion a year on their furry friends

If there's still any doubt about whether the pampering of pets is getting out of hand, the debate should be settled once and for all by Neuticles, a patented testicular implant that sells for up to \$205 a pair. The idea, says inventor Gregg A. Miller, is to "let people measure their pets to anatomical precision" after neutering, thereby allowing them to retain their natural look and self-esteem. "People thought I was crazy when I started 13 years ago," says the Oak Grove, Ill., entrepreneur. But he has since sold more than 240,000 pairs (a few of which went on canine dogs, water buffalos, and monkeys). "Neutering is creepy. But with Neuticles, it's like nothing has changed," flatters, except there's a fake body part where a real one used to be.

Americans now spend \$41 billion a year on their pets—more than the gross domestic product of all but 64 countries in the world. That's double the amount shelled out on pets a decade ago, with annual spending expected to hit \$52 billion in the next few years, according to Petland's Facts, a consumer research company based in Rockville, Md. That puts the yearly cost of buying, feeding, and caring for pets in context of what Americans spent on the movies (\$10.8 billion), playing video games (\$11.6 billion), and listening to recorded music (\$15.6 billion) combined. "Pets are no longer add-ons to reward their pet in pet stores," argues Bob Verter, president of the American Pet Products Manufacturers Assn. (APPMA). "They want to reward their pet in human terms." That means holding instead of leashes, braces to fix crooked teeth, and Lilly Martin tall gowns. Pet owners are becoming increasingly demanding consumers who won't put up with substandard products, unsatisfying environments, or shoddy service for their animals. But the escalating volume and cost of services, especially in the realm of animal medicine, raises ethical issues about how far all this loving should go.

It wasn't so very long ago that the phrase "a dog's life" meant sleeping outdoors, enduring the elements, living with arthritis, and sitting by the dinner table, waiting for a few scraps to land on the floor. Today's dog has it much better. APPMA reports that 42% of dogs now sleep in the owner's bed as their owners, up from 24% in 1980. Their meals reflects even far in human food—from locally sourced organic meat and organ meats to gourmet meals tailored by, say, dieticitians to ward off diet pills. Half of all dog owners say they consider their pet's comfort when buying a car, and almost a third buy gifts for their dog's birthday. Richard G. Wolford, chairman and CEO of Del Monte Foods Co. (DLM), releases even to use the word "bribe." "Anyone who has a pet understands who owns whom," says Wolford, who is owned by two Jack Russell terriers. His company's pet business has gone from nothing to 60% of overall sales through acquisitions of brands such as Meow Mix and Milk-Bone in the past five years.

The rising status of pets has started an unprecedented wave of entrepreneurship in an industry once monopolized by left- and right-brain. There are now \$400 indoor petters, \$200-once perfume, and \$200 trench coats aimed solely at four-footed consumers and their well-being occupations. Even those who abhor animal tourism are increasingly willing to spend thousands on drugs for depression or anxiety in pets, as well as psychotherapy, high-tech cancer surgery, cosmetic procedures, and end-of-life care. About 77% of dogs and 92% of cats have been euthanized in the past year, according to APPMA, an increase of about 20 percentage points from 1995. Some spending can be ascribed by vets who find such services more lucrative than giving shots or ending a pet's life when it contracts a painful or terminal disease.

GRAVITY TRAIN

Once regarded as add-ons for kids, animal companions are more popular now with empty-nesters, single professionals, and couples who delay having children. What unites these disparate demographic groups is a tendency to have time and resources to spare. With more people working from home or living away from their families, pets also play a bigger role in playing the isolation of modern life. About 63% of U.S. households, or 71 million homes, now own at least one pet, up from 64 million just five years ago. And science is starting to validate all those warm feelings with research that documents the death of the human-animal bond.

It doesn't take a scientist to figure out that there's money to be made in this environment. Companies from Procter & Gamble (PG) and

http://www.businessweek.com/print/magazine/content/07_32/b4045001.htm?chan=g

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Global Disparities: Of People And Pets

by M. Shahid Alam

Judging from the ever-more accurate measurements of global disparities that flow from the world's leading humanitarian organizations - with the World Bank, IMF, WTO and OECD taking the lead - it would be no exaggeration to state that scholarly interest in this subject has now turned into a nearly unstoppable epidemic.

These estimates of global disparities still follow the established practice of comparing some characteristic, X, of economic development as it applies to people in rich and poor countries. Most commonly, X refers to per capita income. At other times, X refers to various indicators of the quality of life, such as life expectancy, infant mortality, adult literacy, or some combination of the previous three.

We need a different approach to the measurement of global disparities. The disparities between the rich and poor people are now so large, one has to ask if these comparisons make sense any more. When 25 million of the richest people living in the United States enjoy nearly as much income as 2 billion of the world's poorest people, one begins to wonder if the people in the two groups are the same. It is likely that if knowledge of these comparisons became common, they could lead to the revival of old racist attitudes in the United States. Alternatively, they could induce feelings of deep despair among the world's 2 billion poorest people. And this could turn them into recruits for al-Qaeda.

This is why I am proposing an alternative measure of global disparities. Instead of comparing X across people in poor and rich countries, I am suggesting that we make these comparisons for people in poor countries and mammalian pets in rich countries. In other words, economists at the World Bank, IMF, WTO and OECD should devote some of their resources to tracking how the economies of poor countries - especially in Africa, Latin America and Asia - are faring relative to the economies of pets in the rich countries.

I doubt if the world's leading crusaders for a better world will heed my call anytime soon; they are still fully committed to demonstrating that globalization, the greatest humanitarian project the world has ever seen, is slowly narrowing the gap between the world's rich and poor people - newer mind how large the gap is currently. In the event, I will be so bold as to offer my own admittedly crude comparisons of the economies of the poor people and the pet economies of the rich. A sophisticated estimation of these disparities must wait until I can raise several thousand US dollars to pay for the proprietary data on the pet economies of the rich countries.

We begin this exercise by first establishing some basic facts about the pet economy in the United States. Last time I took an indication of my latent partiality for this great capitalist democracy, I have to protest that I would just as willingly have used the European Union for making my comparisons. Unfortunately, there does not yet exist a European counterpart to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APPPMA), which might have provided some of the basic data on which I base my analysis of the pet economy in the United States.

First, let us establish the size of the mammalian pet economy in the United States; we define mammals to include dogs and cats. According to the APPPMA, the total US pet industry expenditures for 2003 were \$32.4 billion. I assume that 90 percent of this total was allocated to the canine and feline portion of the pet economy; this gives a total expenditure on this segment of the pet economy of \$29.2 billion. Although impressive, these numbers seriously underestimate the true size of America's pet economy.

To the figures provided by APPPMA must be added the value of the time that dog and cat owners dedicate to the care of their pets. Caring for pets can be a daily activity. Naturally, the pets have to be fed daily; they have to be groomed; they have to be taken out for walks; they have to be taken to the vets for shots, worming, injuries and illnesses. And let us not forget that many pet owners, following the advice of holistic veterinarians, avoid ready-to-eat foods for their pets. Instead they prepare home-cooked meals for their dogs and cats. In order to guide them

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Global Disparities: Of People And Pets

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the large-scale adoption of children from poor countries as pets by people in the rich countries. I have no doubt that this proposal will command unanimous support from all the civilized peoples of the world - who, thankfully, inhabit the rich countries.

M. Shahid Alam is professor of economics at Northeastern University in Boston. He may be reached at m.alam@noru.edu. Visit his website at <http://mshahid.net>

In preparing healthy pet foods, the National Academies published in 2003 a revised edition of Nutrient Requirements of Cats and Dogs, a 600-page report prepared by an international team of experts, providing a most comprehensive assessment of the daily nutrient and calorie requirements for dogs and cats.

But that is not all. America's cats and dogs are pampered lot. According to the results of a survey of 1100 pet owners by American Animal Hospital Association in 1999, 100 percent of the respondents indicated that they give their pets a Christmas or Hanukkah present; 87 percent include their pets in holiday celebrations; 65 percent sing or dance for a pet; 83 percent take time off from work to care for a sick pet; 82 percent prepare special meals for their pets; and 44 percent take their pets to work. Clearly, a majority of pet owners in the United States bestow tender loving care on their mammalian pets.

In order to arrive at an estimate of the true size of the pet economy (mammalian section), we would have to add to the APPPMA's estimate of expenditures on pet products and services, the value of the time that pet owners devote to their cats and dogs. We make the modest assumption that dog owners spend one hour each day on their dogs, and cat owners spend 20 minutes each day on their cats. At the same time, we assign a value of US\$ 10 per hour to the pet owner's time. With 66 million dogs and 77.7 million cats, the value of dog-and-cat owners' time comes to \$330.9 billion. Altogether, the value of total expenditures on dogs and cats in the US economy was \$380.1 billion in 2003.

Judging from its size, this is no paltry economy. How does this pet economy compare with the poor economies of the world? To give the poor economies the greatest advantage in the comparisons, we will measure their size in terms of international dollars. By this metric, America's pet economy is 1.2 times larger than the economy of Pakistan with a population of 145 million; it is 1.4 times larger than the economy of Bangladesh with a population of 138 million; it is 2.7 times larger than the economy of Nigeria, with a population of 122 million; and it is 10.8 times larger than the economy of Congo (Democratic Republic) with a population of 34 million; and 34 times the size of the Albanian economy with a population of 3.2 million. In other words, the US pet economy is larger than most of the poor economies in 2003.

How does the US pet economy compare with the world's poor economies on a per capita basis? In 2003, the 142.7 million dogs and cats in the United States enjoyed a per capita consumption of \$2623. The per capita income of world's 2.3 billion people in low income countries (LICs) was \$2190 in 2003 international dollars. This means that the average mammalian pet in the US had a considerably higher standard of living than the average man, woman and child living in the LICs.

The American dogs and cats enjoyed a much larger advantage in their living standards over many individual LICs. The advantage over Sierra Leoneans was 4.8 to one; 4.1 over Tanzanians; 2.8 over Nigerians; 1.3 over Bangladeshis; and 1.2 over Pakistanis. The average Indian had a small advantage of 1.1 over American dogs and cats. The Chinese had a larger lead of 2.0. It is heartening to note that these disparities are considerably smaller than the yawning gaps that emerge when we compare people in the rich countries against people in the poor countries.

One might think that these more upbeat comparisons give reasons for optimism for the world's poor. Given the smaller disparities between the poor people and rich pets, the poor people can at least dream that once the great humanitarian project of globalization begins to yield its trickle-down benefits to the poor, they will, in the not-too-distant future, be able to catch up with the dogs and cats in the United States.

Or is this hope only a delusion? That will depend on how fast the two economies grow: to what degree they benefit from globalization. The promise of globalization is to make the rich richer so that some of their prosperity can trickle down to their pets and the poor peoples. Although I hate to be a spoiler of this inspiring narrative - very ably modeled by Ivy League economists - with some trembling, I must vent some dark thoughts on this subject. I fear that the pets will come out better as globalization unfolds. As I see it, the reason for this is quite simple. The rich are much more likely to saddle their pets than the poor of the world, unless they employ them as mule, mail-order brides or as prostitutes. This is not because of any prejudice the rich have against the world's poor people. It's just that the poor people live in difficult-to-reach, mostly hot and humid countries, whereas the pets share the same living quarters with the rich.

Does this mean that if the poor people could be used as pets by the rich, this would greatly improve their chances of deriving stronger gains from globalization? If this is indeed true, we can confidently expect that the US delegates to the World Trading Organization will soon propose appropriate changes in the global trading regime to allow for

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Of people and pets
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Global Disparities: Of People And Pets
by M. Shahid Alam

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never mind how large the gap is currently. In the event, I will be so bold as to offer my own admittedly crude comparisons of the economies of the poor people and the pet economies of the rich. A sophisticated estimation of these disparities must wait until I can raise several thousand US dollars to pay for the proprietary data on the pet economies of the rich countries.

We begin this exercise by first establishing some basic facts about the pet economy in the United States. Let this be taken as an indication of my latent partiality for this great capitalist democracy. I have to protest that I would just as willingly have used the European Union for making my comparisons. Unfortunately, there does not yet exist a European counterpart to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association (APFMA), which might have provided some of the basic data on which I base my analysis of the pet economy in the United States.

First, let us establish the size of the mammalian pet economy in the United States; we define mammals to include dogs and cats. According to the APFMA, the total US pet industry expenditures for 2003 were \$12.4 billion. I assume that 90 percent of this total was allocated to the canine and feline portion of the pet economy; this gives a total expenditure on this segment of the pet economy of \$11.2 billion. Although impressive, these numbers seriously underestimate the true size of America's pet economy.

To the figures provided by APFMA must be added the value of the time that dog and cat owners dedicate to the care of their pets. Caring for pets can be a daily activity. Naturally, the pets have to be fed daily; they have to be groomed; they have to be taken out for walks; they have to be taken to the vets for shots, worming, injuries and illnesses. And let us not forget that many pet owners, following the advice of holistic veterinarians, avoid ready-to-eat foods for their pets. Instead they prepare home-cooked meals for their dogs and cats. In order to guide them in preparing healthy pet foods, the National Academies published in 2003 a revised edition of *Nutrient Requirements of Cats and Dogs*, a 500-page report prepared by an international team of experts, providing a most comprehensive assessment of the daily nutrient and calorie requirements for dogs and cats.

But that is not all. America's cats and dogs are a pampered lot. According to the results of a survey of 1100 pet owners by American Animal Hospital Association in 1999, 100 percent of the respondents indicated that they give their pets a Christmas or Hanukkah present; 87 percent include their pets in holiday celebrations; 65 percent sing or dance for a pet; 53 percent take time off from work to care for a sick pet; 52 percent prepare special meals for their pets; and 44 percent take their pets to work. Clearly, a majority of pet owners in the United States bestow tender loving care on their mammalian pets.

In order to arrive at an estimate of the true size of the pet economy (mammalian section), we would have to add to the APFMA's estimate of expenditures on pet products and services, the value of the time that pet owners devote to their cats and dogs. We make the modest assumption that dog owners spend one hour each day on their dogs, and cat owners spend 20 minutes each day on their cats. At the same time, we assign a value of US\$ 10 per hour to the pet owner's time. With 65 million dogs and 77.7 million cats, the value of dog-and-cat owners' time comes to \$130.9 billion. Altogether, the value of total expenditures on dogs and cats in the US economy was \$360.1 billion in 2003.

Judging from its size, this is no paltry economy. How does this pet economy compare with the poor economies of the world? To give the poor economies the greatest advantage in the comparisons, we will measure their size in

terms of international dollars. By this metric, America's pet economy is 12 times larger than the economy of Pakistan with a population of 148 million; it is 1.4 times larger than the economy of Bangladesh with a population of 138 million; it is 2.7 times larger than the economy of Nigeria, with a population of 122 million; and it is 30.6 times larger than the economy of Congo (Democratic Republic) with a population of 34 million; and 24 times the size of the Albanian economy with a population of 3.2 million. In other words, the US pet economy is larger than most of the poor economies in 2003.

How does the US pet economy compare with the world's poor economies on a per capita basis? In 2003, the 142.7 million dogs and cats in the United States enjoyed a per capita consumption of \$232. The per capita income of world's 2.3 billion people in low income countries (LICs) was \$2150 in 2003 international dollars. This means that the average mammalian pet in the US had a considerably higher standard of living than the average man, woman and child living in the LICs.

The American dogs and cats enjoyed a much larger advantage in their living standards over many individual LICs. The advantage over Sierra Leone was 4.8 to one; 4.1 over Tanzania; 2.8 over Nigeria; 1.3 over Bangladesh; and 1.2 over Pakistan. The average Indian had a small advantage of 1.1 over American dogs and cats. The Chinese had a larger lead of 2.0. It is heartening to note that these disparities are considerably smaller than the yawning gaps that emerge when we compare people in the rich countries against people in the poor countries.

One might think that these more upbeat comparisons give reasons for optimism for the world's poor. Given the smaller disparities between the poor people and rich pets, the poor people can at least dream that once the great humanitarian project of globalization begins to yield its trickle-down benefits to the poor, they will, in the not too distant future, be able to catch up with the dogs and cats in the United States.

Or is this hope only a delusion? That will depend on how fast for two economies grow: to what degree they benefit from globalization. The promise of globalization is to make the rich richer so that some of their prosperity can trickle down to their pets and the poor people. Although I like to be a spoiler of this ingenious narrative - very ably modeled by Ivy League economists - with some trembling, I must vent some dark thoughts on this subject. I fear that the pet will come out better as globalization unfolds. As I see it, the reason for this is quite simple. The rich are much more likely to co-opt their pet than the poor of the world, unless they employ them as maids, mail-order brides or as pawns. This is not because of any prejudice the rich have against the world's poor people. It's just that the poor people live in difficult to reach, muddy hot and humid countries, whereas the pets share the same living quarters with the rich.

Does this mean that if the poor people could be used as pets by the rich, this would greatly improve their chances of deriving stronger gains from globalization? If this is indeed true, we can confidently expect that the US delegates to the World Trading Organization will soon propose appropriate changes in the global trading regime to allow for the large-scale adoption of children from poor countries as pets by people in the rich countries. I have no doubt that this proposal will command unanimous support from all the civilized peoples of the world - who, thankfully, inhabit the rich countries.

M. Shahid Alam is professor of economics at Northeastern University in Boston. He may be reached at m.alam@neu.edu. Visit his website at <http://muslim.net>.

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It's a pet economy - Sacramento Business Journal

Page 1 of 2

Sacramento Business Journal - August 20, 2007
<http://24sacramento.bizjournal.com/sacramento/stories/2007/08/20/story3.htm>

BUSINESS JOURNAL

Friday, August 17, 2007

It's a pet economy

Businesses are quick to respond to Sacramentans' love affair with animals

Sacramento Business Journal - by Kelly Johnson, Staff writer

Sacramentans are sharing quality time with their dogs at Sacramento River Cats games and "Yappy Hour" at Cafe Bernardo, and sneaking them into supermarkets and elsewhere.

They're lavishing their furry friends with massages, stays at luxury pet hotels, designer clothes and even alcoholic beer and ice cream designed for dogs. When Fido or Fluffy gets sick, their owners are spending thousands of dollars on procedures previously reserved for people, such as acupuncture, total hip replacement and even pacemakers.

The Business Journal examines individual segments within the growing pet industry. Why so much attention on a seemingly tame subject?

Put simply, the pet industry is big business.

U.S. pet owners are expected to spend \$40.8 billion this year on their animals, an amount that is expected to rise for several more years. This is in part because the healthy among the oldest baby boomers are spending freely to assure their pets are well cared for while they travel, and the unhealthy are investing in more devices and services so they can keep their pets at home with them longer.

The biggest category of spending is food -- U.S. pet owners are expected to pay \$16.1 billion this year, according to the **American Pet Products Manufacturers Association**. Supplies and over-the-counter medicine is next at \$9.9 billion, while vet care comes in third with \$9.8 billion.

The United States has more pets on which to lavish all this attention and money than it did two decades ago. Of U.S. households, 63 percent, or 71.1 million homes, own a pet, compared to 56 percent in 1988, according to the APFMA. These pet owners are more likely to consider themselves mom or dad than owner. People also are rewarding their animals in human terms, such as by providing them with polished nails, Paul Mitchell beauty products or plasma wall TVs in their luxury pet hotel suite.

This giving isn't one-sided. For all this lavish treatment, pets are providing much in return, not just for pet owners but for society at large. Research has found that animals soothe us, reduce anxiety, lower blood pressure and increase social and verbal interactions between people.

The following stories cover these issues and more:

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Pets gone wild, by Kelly Johnson

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Some vets look to East for treatments, by Celia Lamb

Horse industry riding steady despite trail-weary economy, by Melanie Turner

Healthcare providers, others unleash power of canine comfort, by Kathy Robertson

Doors open to dogs, by Mark Anderson

Western Feed owner uses nutrition to attract new customers, by Bob Schmidt

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Appendix E: Feeding Different Pets Different Foods

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Cat Food: Different cats, different dietary needs

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 do I keep the cats from eating each others food? Rate Questions

By [Anonymous](#) Asked Jun 27 2007 4:48AM

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Top Answer out of 2

by [tiredsublimis is bubbling away in the cold](#) on Jul 14, 2007 at 5:49 pm [Permalink](#)

feed them at different times. While one is eating, entertain the other and vice versa, or put one in another room with the door closed until the other is done eating.

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 Feed them in separate rooms

Comments

Anonymous Jun, 27 2007 at 07:09 AM
I tried the separate rooms idea. Whenever I tried to put it, Fat Cat Ends it.

smart9426 Jun, 27 2007 at 06:37 AM
With closed doors, maybe even a cupboard or something! Or, if you can, feed one when the other is out? You mustn't let him win!

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Add an Answer

I have 2 cats with very different dietary needs (one is 21 pounds and needs a diet food, the other is under 6 pounds and needs a high fat food, according to the vet). How do I keep the cats from eating each others food?

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Cat Food: Different cats, different dietary needs

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Trish

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Resolved Question

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How can I make my dog stop eating the cats food?

My Shepard/Collie mix always eats the cat's food. She then gets diarrhea (up?) and poops in the basement sometime while we're sleeping. She goes outside to potty a few times during the day, but she still goes in

<http://au.answers.yahoo.com/answers2/frontend.php/question?id=20080121173320AA3...> 1/23/2008

How can I make my dog stop eating the cats food? - Yahoo! Answers

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- Rating: **Bad Answer**
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by [yashier puppies rule](#)

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I guess you'll have to not free feed the cat since the cats not getting the food anyway...feed the cat 3x a day to start.
1 day ago
2 Rating: **Good Answer**
0 Rating: **Bad Answer**
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by [pricette](#)
Member since:
22 February 2006

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How can I make my dog stop eating the cats food? - Yahoo! Answers

Page 2 of 10

the basement.

Is there any way to make her stop eating the cats food? I can't put it up anywhere, the parents don't want the cats to eat on the table or on the counter. That and the dog could get to it if I put it on a table or counter (she's a big girl).

- 1 day ago

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by [May Domaluce](#)

Member since:
04 January 2008
Total points:
1391 (Level 3)

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Best Answer - Chosen by Asker

you could buy a "Scat mat" or "stay mat" to discourage your dog from going near it... but that would conflict with your cats... you really need to get your parents to allow you to put the cat food up on the counter because dogs can get protein poisoning and kidney/liver failure. Oh, another idea, get a cat crate, or box and your cat can go into the crate to eat the food but your dog shouldn't be able to fit inside of it, or reach it, or what about the bathroom counter? I understand they don't want the cats in the kitchen, but the bathroom should be fine, no?

- 1 day ago

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Asker's Rating:
★★★★

Asker's Comment:
The crate/box idea is a great idea! Thank you! I will have to bring a box home from work in the morning.

Is this what you are searching for?

- Rating: **Good Answer**

<http://au.answers.yahoo.com/answers2/frontend.php/question?id=20080121173320AA3...> 1/23/2008

How can I make my dog stop eating the cats food? - Yahoo! Answers

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Total points:
2656 (Level 4)
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Put the cat food on the washing machine so the dog can't get it. The cat will jump up and eat on the washer.

- 1 day ago
- 2 Rating: **Good Answer**
- 0 Rating: **Bad Answer**
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by [moking...](#)

Member since:
22 January 2008
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106 (Level 1)

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Try putting in a small space or covering so that only the cat can reach it. Remember cats are very nimble.

- 1 day ago
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by [Kristin M](#)

Member since:
09 September 2007
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507 (Level 2)

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maybe you can feed the cat on a table, or in a cat condo some where the dog can't get to

- 1 day ago
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by [Pam](#)

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22 December 2007
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Tell your parents that the only way to really stop this permanently is to put the food up. Letting the cat on one piece of furniture is better than having a dog with an upset stomach and diarrhea on the floor.

It does not have to be a counter or table, it could be a high shelf or something.

- ◊ 1 day ago
- ◊ [1 Rating: Good Answer](#)
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by [Tapettry...](#)

Member since:

28 October 2006

Total points:

28729 (Level 7)

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My friends keep the cat dish on the counter or some other high place where the cat can get to her food but the dog cannot. If your dog is jumping on the counter that is very odd, he should have been trained never to do that long ago...the only other suggestion is keep the cat in one room all day or the dog. Separate them from each other's food dish.

- ◊ 1 day ago
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by [Cockade...](#)

Member since:

02 January 2008

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if its possible try to feed the cats in a different room where your dog cant get in.

- ◊ 1 day ago
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by [Dr. KIA GCG is Irish™](#)

Member since:

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567 (Level 2)

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I keep the cats food and litterbox in the laundry room and keep a baby gate up so the dog can't get in there...

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by [Tavis R](#)

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Take the cat food and give it dog food.

- ◊ 1 day ago
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by [Underestimated But Never Tainted](#)

Member since:

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1013 (Level 4)

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hide the cats food.

- ◊ 1 day ago
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by [Jodi](#)

Member since:

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I had the same problem and I asked the vet about it. He told me that cat food is alright for dogs to eat, so now I just buy cat food and they all eat it. Much easier :)

- ◊ 1 day ago
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by [The Scout](#)

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simple fix

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by [alanwptd](#)

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You can, really. Cat food is much higher in fat and protein than dog food and because of this is exceptionally delicious and appealing to dogs. Your only option really is to keep the cat food out of reach from the dog or to feed the cat on a schedule just like you would a dog. If your parents don't want to put the cat food up on a counter or table, consider getting a baby gate and putting it across the door to the room where the cat food is. If your cats are young and agile they can simply jump over the fence...if they are older and/or arthritic you could simply raise the gate up a few inches off the floor so that the cats can fit underneath but the dog can't (this may also help prevent the dog from jumping over the gate). Personally I feed my cats on a schedule...they get fed twice a day, usually at the same time as the dogs. I do it more because my cats all have different dietary needs (and one cat is a phanton who will eat until he pukes and then go back and eat some more) and these needs are best met by a scheduled, measured feeding. But it also works VERY well to keep the dogs out of the cat bowls...while the dogs are eating so are the cats and by the time the dogs are done the cat food is all gone.

Edit: The crate idea is excellent! I had never thought of that, but it would work. It wouldn't even have to be a small crate either, you could buy a large airline crate and cut a hole in the plastic just large enough for the cats and put the food back so that even if the dog gets her head through she can't reach the food.

- ◊ 1 day ago
- ◊ [0 Rating: Good Answer](#)
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by [Francis...](#)

Member since:

06 January 2008

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127 (Level 1)

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try putting it somewhere where the dog cant get it or build some sort of little box where the cat could go in and eat and the dog cant.

- ◊ 1 day ago
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Buy a cat jungle gym. Made of carpet with an area on the top that he can sit. Only feed him up there.

- ◊ 21 hours ago
- ◊ [0 Rating: Good Answer](#)
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by [Jacqueline W](#)

Member since:

14 May 2007

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put the dog in another part of the house while the cats are eating. That way he can't get to the food.

- ◊ 14 hours ago
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that way and I am tired and should be in bed so maybe I am not enjoying myself well) does not mean you have to let him tell you what to do. It is YOUR home so I would feed your cats when you have always been feeding them. I did not add every good quality food, just a few examples (should have made that clear and sorry if I did not - yours has a good reputation and all cats are different. Some do very well on dry food and obviously, yours seems to have been healthy but his attitude on a diet may not be helping them and you should tell him that. There is a lot of discussion about dry vs wet food and I worry my little Sammie doesn't drink as much water as she needs - she loves tubbers and shrimp (the real thing) and I do give her some but just enough for her needs - and the tubbers don't have water as they cannot feed. The Sphynx will gulp water as they might do well on a dry diet - when they come as kittens, they suck on a dry diet but I have gradually changed it as all 3 cats are on the same food for the most part. I sometimes think cats are like teenagers - they like to prove a point. In so much of I might think of some dry as "punished", I do buy the better brands as they can have some food now and then. I know - I know the occasional R/C/D/G cat can't eat very well be a hypocrite and deny my babies, lol (but I do not give them much dry stuff)

But that said, all cats are different and cats as creatures of habit have to change a diet. That, it is not healthy or good radically change a cat's diet quickly - it has to be done slowly! I think you can needs to respect that it is YOUR home and your rules and he is indeed lucky to have someone who lets him and the cats stay somewhere without him telling you what to do. Maybe I have a short fuse (I really don't - I try to be diplomatic, lol) but I would explain the ground rules once he moves in. Like these are the rules. This says my cats and they eat less this, regardless of what you think. They are thriving and healthy were they not?

It may well be the change in eating that has created the eating problem - that is not uncommon actually plus the chaos of a new member AND new cats in the bargain! I guess that's how to feed but cats in his room and your cats can eat in a room for them - do they have their own room or sleep with you? The Sphynx Girls, cats, do tolerate with all of mommy (cats is still not very well and things have been going downhill but we wait for miracle) (guess), started out with their own bedchamber with all their things but now it's all sleep with me - with that said, another, the Sphynx love the heating pad (just for cats) and warm comforters to read under and MY fur but a bit hot if it is so the cat is a chatter box - the one does hog the pillow, lol

They adjusted to the new shared food (they share with Holly Scone - lol did it at 12 weeks) but I have always been a Wolfman fan and so now they all eat that the Y's has been to "fun" on occasion and when far away feed (my dad's back, lol) - the cat is not half as bad as the time he was all strong and could not feed the cat food and he had an entire can of Chicken (he was drinking the powder she became grandpa's girl, lol, so, those are her bad habits. The Sphynx are champion chew cats and starts another story!! (YY is a show quality too but I had not planned on showing her as she is scared). I think the Sphynx have been enough trouble now this to be happy - or maybe have one later but do I want to do that when there are actual Sphynx actually sleeping home? I am not sure I can be that arrogant - yes, they have taken genes going back any generations and not a few between them but the also come the back out of me (the British cats before and that part does not spare me but I worry about them having problems and think of all the possibilities that can go wrong. S pneumonia, rabies shot, in the birth canal, infection - maybe I am too much of the negative side of this in my work, I don't know).

Anyway - sorry to go off topic again - I have to go to bed!! I really think you need to set the rules in your own home and despite his problems, do not let him fully suffer!! And as you are worried about the health of these 3 cats, take them to the vet - I am not sure he would last long in my home unless he was prepared to listen to my rules or negotiate and he should rather chose another in his ways

Good luck!! I hope your kitties are OK!!

Answers:

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http://www.tendlife.com/generals/talk-1797.html

1/23/2008

http://www.petsgettin.com.co.uk/forum/view/?thread=3

1/23/2008

RSPCA -

Page 2 of 4

RSPCA -

Page 3 of 4

subject: RE: Two cats - one is overweight and the other is not
Message:
I have to feed my cats in separate rooms as my overweight cat is on special diet food provided by the vets. It takes a long time as she eats very slowly whilst the normal weight cat is a speedster, so while he is still eating I have to keep her shut out the room. I don't leave any food down during the day when I am not in. I know she will eat it all and he won't get any, but sadly he has a bit of a belly on him anyway so isn't ideal!

Author: ovent
subject: RE: Two cats - one is overweight and the other is not
Message:
I have the same problem! One is fat, one overweight cat... They both eat from the same bowl except when they get a little fish each, so getting the plump one on a diet is going to be interesting. We usually leave dry food out for them in the tin cat (Pinto) can regulate her own eating fine. I guess they will both have to have more regulated eating habits now. I would not like to stop leaving dry food out during the day as Patsy goes out lots, and if there is no food at home, Patsy will find other places to eat...

Author: Cocklemonster
subject: RE: Two cats - one is overweight and the other is not
Message:
Why does H/C come out as the author of my message, is that someone writing for this site? My login name is Cocklemonster. I imagine this is happening for other people too (I noticed the names Carly and Scott_76 come up here, though it seems to be different people writing the messages). Can someone at petgettin look into this please? Thanks

Author: Administrator
subject: RE: Two cats - one is overweight and the other is not
Message:
Cocklemonster wrote:
Why does H/C come out as the author of my message, is that someone writing for this site? My login name is Cocklemonster. I imagine this is happening for other people too (I noticed the names Carly and Scott_76 come up here, though it seems to be different people writing the messages). Can someone at petgettin look into this please? Thanks
Thank you for your feedback Cocklemonster, the bug has now been fixed.

Author: Cocklemonster
subject: RE: Two cats - one is overweight and the other is not
Message:
Excellent, very prompt indeed. Thank you!

http://www.petsgettin.com.co.uk/forum/view/?thread=3

1/23/2008

http://www.petsgettin.com.co.uk/forum/view/?thread=3

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subject: RE: Two cats - one is overweight and the other is not
Message:
I have a similar problem but - 2 cats - brother and sister - the boy is quite a bit heavier than the
girl. He is quite an active cat though and loves to play and charges round the garden. I don't think I
am over-feeding them - they have a pouch each in the morning - I have a few biscuits out during
the day and then they have a pouch each in the evening. I don't really want to cut back on the food
as I don't want them going looking elsewhere for it. The vet recommended giving them light
biscuits which I thought was quite a good idea but all the brands that do the 'light' version just
seem to be in chicken flavour - seems a bit odd for cat to give them any flavour variety. Any tips
would be really appreciated.
[Quote](#)
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Appendix F: Pet Health



OBESITY IN CATS...and What To Do About An Overweight Cat

Ever wonder what to do about your overweight cat? Obesity in cats is very common and can predispose the cat to diabetes, Hepatic Lipidosis and arthritis. Overweight and actually obese cats outnumber cats of normal weight and are being seen more and more commonly by veterinarians for various disorders. Weightloss plans in cats needs to be approached very carefully. This page will help you determine what to do about overweight cats so that your kitty won't have to be encumbered by obesity.

There are more cats than dogs in the USA at this time. And 40 percent of those cats are considered to be obese! Only 5 to 10 percent of all cats can be classified as only slightly overweight. In recent years Feline Diabetes Mellitus (diabetes) has become almost a daily diagnosis in animal hospitals all across America. Our cats are at risk for a number of obesity related disorders. Documented research indicates obese cats are far more prone than cats of normal body weight to Diabetes, arthritis and a very serious disorder called Hepatic Lipidosis. And the 40 percent obesity figure seems to be growing.



So what is happening that predisposes our domestic felines to a life of sedentary obesity? The answer is multifactorial but is simply, just remember this... any individual mammal (dog, cat, horse, human, etc.) will gain body weight if it consumes more calories than it burns as fuel for energy. That's pretty simple, but true. In nature, food acquisition has never been a sure thing for any creature...not for canines, felines or humans. So food acquisition trials always been accompanied by physical exertion to capture (or cultivate) and consume the food. It is only in recent times that the unnatural situation of food excess, readily acquired and consumed with little accompanying physical exertion, has become a way of life. We humans have figured how not to have to do all that work of capturing and cultivating to build up stores of food. Through agricultural experience we have learned how to grow food and raise livestock and to have those food sources readily available and in abundance...just in case we get hungry. We learned how to refrigerate, dry, preserve and store foodstuffs large quantities that assured us we would not have to endure long and unsuccessful hunting forays nor suffer through famines. We have created the very same food acquisition assurances for our domestic dogs and cats. They, as we, no longer have to hunt to survive. Indeed, we no longer even have to live outdoors.

It's interesting that our pets have mirrored our own tendency to have trouble with weight control. The major difference, though, is that we humans have complete free will over what our pets eat and how much they eat. Unless your dog or cat is sneaking into the fridge and making trains and cheese sandwiches late at night when no one is around, the only way they get to eat is when YOU place the food in front of them.

Every veterinarian has repeatedly heard a serious minded dog or cat owner state "I know you think she's overweight, Doctor,

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glucose tends to stay higher than normal for long periods of time. They become persistently hyperglycemic and this long term stimulus on the beta cells in the pancreas...the cells that produce insulin...renders those cells less sensitive to the blood glucose. As a result less insulin is secreted to bring down the blood sugar level. Nutritionists call this "burning regulation" of the beta cells. The insensitivity of the insulin secreting beta cells leads to what is termed "insulin resistance". The scenario is a prelude to diabetes.

PROTEIN

We all know how cats crave mice and birds as a food source. A natural source of nutrition for carnivores, mice and birds are a perfect diet for a cat. Did you know that a mouse or a bird is composed of only 3 to 4 percent carbohydrate? And most of that is actually from what the prey was eating and is in the prey's digestive tract. The rest is water, a few minerals, and mostly protein and fat.

What we do...

Many of us purchase dry cat foods, some with food coloring to make it look like meat and with four and six grams and preservatives. We buy these dry foods partly because they state that this COMPLETE and BALANCED for cats and because it is convenient for us to pour a few days' worth of food into a bowl for the kitty to eat whenever it wants. Unfortunately, most dry cat food brands are relatively low in protein...especially the less expensive brands that state a grain such as corn is the first (major) ingredient. Another associated problem is the myth that we often feed our cats (and dogs) too much protein. This indefensible myth...that protein causes kidney problems...is totally unfounded and has caused more dogs and cats to suffer from poor diets than just about any other cause. So please to see reasons why the myth is just that...a myth with no scientific affirmation.)



What we should do...

We must feed cats a diet with high percentages of protein and fat and low percentages of carbohydrate (grain) if we expect them to maintain optimum body weights and a proper state of nutrition. Protein is THE key nutrient in a carnivore diet. On a dry weight basis...where the percented ingredients is determined without any water in the ratio...a feline's diet should contain 33 to 43 percent protein, 40 percent fat, and possibly just a small percentage of carbohydrate. (Remember...a true carnivore needs NO carbohydrate in the diet.) Some nutritionists suggest 25% carbohydrate...30% protein...25% fat. Click the link to see a window that shows how to calculate the dry weight percentages in dry and canned food because if you look at the label of any canned food you will never find a food with high percentages of protein or fat because of the high moisture content of canned food. These low percentages DO NOT indicate a lack of high nutritional content. To see why...[CLICK](#)

CAT TREATS

We seem to think we need to reward our cats with food...and that's why cat treats are so popular. Nearly every cat caretaker has referred, too, when our cat has begun to vocalize, non-verbally and seem to "need something". This is normal interactive behavior for a cat and has no relationship to the cat being hungry! But we perceive the kitty to be hungry so we give it a treat as a snack. And most cat treats are especially favored to be irresistible to cats, otherwise they wouldn't eat well and there'd be no profit for the manufacturer. Give your cat a treat for vocalizing and you have rewarded for vocalizing...and you have just taught the cat to vocalize even more. If you MUST give cat treats to your cat, read below how to do so judiciously and nutritiously.

What we do...

As sensitive and caring humans, we always want to reward our kitty by providing extra special treats. Most treats for cats have high levels of carbohydrate (flour and sugars) and/or a lot of flavor enhancers to entice the cat to eat even when it is not hungry. Cats that annoy us with vocalizing and pretending that they are starving to death sometimes are rewarded for that annoying vocalizing by being given a treat to "keep them quiet". When we provide the treat we reinforce the vocalizing, effectively rewarding the cat for making all that racket, and essentially training the cats to make even more noise!

What we should do...

Stop feeding treats to the overweight cat. If you think your cat NEEDS a treat, cut up little bits of cooked chicken or fish and feed as a natural protein treat...not a treat made from grains, food coloring, propylene glycol, and flavor enhancers. And NEVER feed a treat as a means of stopping a cat from vocalizing because it has the exact opposite effect and actually reinforces the cat's vocalizing/begging behavior.

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but I don't from the food! She hardly eats a thing!" Well...is the pet overweight from high calorie air? Maybe it's the water...or from lying on that couch all the time. That's it. The couch is making the kitty fat, not the food. Seriously, far too many pet owners truly believe that food intake has nothing at all to do with their pet's weight and no amount of counseling will convince them otherwise. If that describes your position, read no further because the rest of this article is all about how to feed the proper food and in the correct quantity so that the cat will lose weight safely or maintain an optimum weight. There will be nothing in this article about the effect of high calorie air, water or comfortable furniture on the cat's weight problem.

Any cat that is overweight should have a physical exam performed, exact weight measured and blood and urine tests run. It is vital that normal thyroid hormone levels are present and that the cat has no physical or metabolic dysfunction. If the cat is physically normal, other than the abnormal body weight from fat deposits, then a gradual and careful weight loss program can be initiated. First, let's look at what the causes of obesity are and what we can do to correct OUR mistakes:

FREE CHOICE FEEDING

The main reason for feline obesity (as well as obesity in other mammals) is the consumption of too much food. Deny it! you want to live it! But...

Many cats are fed "free choice", which means there is food available all the time and the cat eats whenever it wants. (Pretty sure that for a true carnivore that evolved as a hunting machine) Free choice feeding has probably been the biggest single factor contributing to feline obesity.

What we should do...

Feed two to four small portions daily and control the amounts fed so that over a period of time the cat does not gain weight. Many pet owners must downsize what they think is a "normal" portion. A meal for a 175-pound human might weigh 16 to 24 ounces. A seven-pound cat weighs 1/25 of the 175-pound human. So a cat's meal should proportionally be about 1/25 of a human meal. That comes out to between 0.6 and 1.0 ounce of food per meal for a seven-pound cat...about the same weight as a mouse. Cat owners must stop thinking in terms of "cups of food" and start thinking in terms of ounces of food.

CARBOHYDRATE

Cats, unlike most mammals, have no carbohydrate-digesting enzyme called Amylase in their saliva. Humans and dogs do and actually begin the digestion of carbohydrate in the mouth. In the intestine, amylase secreted from the pancreas breaks down large carbohydrate molecules into absorbable smaller units of glucose. Cats have measurably less amylase activity than humans or dogs. Nature did not intend the kitty to be a carbohydrate consumer.

What we do...

We purchase commercial, attractively packaged and preserved dry foods mainly because we can pour it in the bowl and forget it. Dry pet food must have higher levels of flour and sugar than canned foods so that the kibble will stay uniform and not fall apart. Spoiling spoils readily occur because of the preservatives so the kitty can eat whenever it wants and we don't have to prepare cat meals every day. Unfortunately, especially with dry diets, because of the metabolic biochemistry that converts the high carbohydrate content in almost all of today's commercial cat foods into stored fat, the cat is really at risk for weight gain.

What we should do...

Feed a diet consistent with the nature of a true carnivore...a meat-based diet. An ideal feline diet will have a high protein level in the 35 to 43 percent range on a dry matter basis (meaning the percent in the diet when the water has been removed) and moderate fat content with a low percentage of carbohydrate (grains). A multitude of research reports have proven that diets high in protein and fat are most beneficial for carnivores. Cats cannot handle large carbohydrate loads efficiently. After a meal rich in carbohydrate the feline's blood level of

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LABEL RECOMMENDATIONS

All pet foods come with Recommended Feeding instructions. The problem is that these recommendations are NOT absolute requirements even though most pet caretakers think they have to feed their pet the recommended amounts. Mosthouse kept dogs and cats, if fed at the amounts stated in the label recommendations, will eventually become overweight. Pay attention to your pet's body weight (size) and just by simple observation decide if it is overweight. If so, don't feed as much.

What we do...

Feeding the "Recommended" daily portions indicated on pet food labels will nearly always result in feeding more calories than the animal needs for an average day's energy requirements. The carbohydrate excess, unneeded as fuel for metabolism or physical activity, gets converted to fat and stored in the cat's fat reserves. The odds are very high that if you feed the size and numbers of meals suggested on the pet food label's feeding recommendations, the cat (or dog) will end up overweight.

What we should do...

Adjust the amount fed to the cat's body structure and physical activity. If the cat looks and feels overweight...if it's too fat...you are feeding too much for that cat's needs for energy for exercise or physical activity, and regardless of what the pet food label's suggested amounts to feed are, you must feed less than that if the cat is to have a normal (healthy) body weight.

EXERCISE

What we do...

We fill the bowls with food and water, clean the litter box, and say "See you later, kitty, I'm off to work". OK...let's say that you can't help it. You simply are not going to change the food amounts, kibble and portions you have always been feeding your overweight cat. If you are to be successful in promoting weight loss in your cat you will have to increase its energy (calorie) burning activities. This is much easier to do with a dog by taking it for a walk or run, throwing a ball, swimming, etc. Good luck going for a run with your cat! Most cats spend most of their time sleeping on the couch, are left alone for long periods of time and really have nothing happening in the home that would trigger a carnivorous hunter's interest levels. There is nothing to chase, nothing to hide from, and nothing to stalk and run down. There is nothing else to do but to take cat naps!

What we should do...

To assist in improving the kitty's physical activity, you can add some interactive play toys to the cat's environment. Consider adopting a friendly and playful cat from the local shelter or the solitary cat is "someone" to interact and play with. Many people believe two cats are more fun to have and more entertaining and no more trouble than a single cat. You can also buy toys that simulate an escaping prey that really interest the cat in play activities. Cats can be exercised but you may need some imaginative toys and ideas to get the job done. [PetFoodDirect.com](#) has a good selection of cat toys.

WHAT SHOULD YOU FEED A CAT?

Cats, unlike us humans, obtain food satisfaction less from carbohydrate than they do from protein intake. Give them a high protein mouse and they are as happy as can be. One mouse would make a good meal for an average sized cat. A typical mouse is made of 26% Protein (meat), 3% fat and lots of moisture. And now that you know that the cat is a true carnivore, that its metabolic pathways have been set by natural evolutionary processes to efficiently utilize meat protein as a major component of the diet, you understand why a carbohydrate rich diet simply does not make sense for felines. Cats are not plant-based grazers, they are hunters of other animals and to insure an optimum state of health they must comply with what nature programmed them to be. There are no vegetarian diets for cats. No matter what your own personal preference is regarding the ingestion of meat by nature's own laws the cat requires meat in the diet. One small aspect of this need for meat is the cat's requirement for ingesting preformed Vitamin B12 (Cyanocobalamin)...preformed in another non-feline mammal. Go to [this page](#) to see how a cat's physiology is different from a dog's.

Click the link to see a window that shows how to calculate the dry weight percentages in dry and canned food because if you look at the label of any canned food you will never find a food with high percentages of protein or fat. That's because of the water content of canned food. These low percentages DO NOT indicate a lack of high nutritional content. To see why...[CLICK](#)

As the cat's caretaker, you have complete control over what your cat eats, how much it eats and how often it eats. Do not worry about the kibble and guess "estimating some amount to clean off the bowl". Cats and dogs being fed cat/meat based diets have far fewer oral health problems than those consuming dry, grain-based diets. Other good dry food products will demonstrate protein levels above 30 percent and fat levels above 10 percent in the Guaranteed Analysis table on the pet food label. Usually these diets are the "Grainin" or "Puppy" or "Kitten" diets...and these formulations can be fed for life in a healthy individual that does not require a [therapeutic diet](#). If you still fear the erroneous myth about "too much protein" being "bad" for dogs and

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cats or that protein "taxes" kidney damage, you really need some facts. There are numerous documented reports that will allow your fears and will update you on correct research. The myth about protein causing kidney trouble was extrapolated from research done on rodents many decades ago, the myth developed a life of its own in spite of being refuted by proper research on dogs and cats.

WEIGHT LOSS DIETS

Getting an obese cat to lose weight needs to be done gradually... no crash diets allowed! Cats have a unique metabolic response to fasting and whenever a feline's food intake is rapidly and markedly depressed, a serious and potentially fatal disorder can occur called **Hepatic Lipidosis**.

One of the reasons for the success of a high protein diet for feline weight reduction is the importance of an amino acid called Carnitine. Carnitine is present in good quantities in muscle tissues, but found in minuscule amounts in vegetable matter. This amino acid plays an essential role in the uptake of absorbed fat molecules and conversion of fat by the liver back to triglycerides. The ability to mobilize fat tissue to be used as glucose for energy (and for subsequent weight loss to be accomplished) requires Carnitine in the process. Supplementing a cat's diet with L-Carnitine in amounts approximating 250 to 500 mg per cat per day will assist in mobilizing fat into glucose and will improve the health of a cat that is on a weight loss program.

The Plan

First, your veterinarian needs to do a thorough physical exam, blood chemistry profile including Thyroid hormone evaluation, and record an accurate weight for the cat. Then you should gradually... over a period of three to four weeks... add greater and greater proportions of the suggested feline weight-loss diet. Mix the new diet with the old, slowly decreasing the percentage of the old diet and increasing the percentage of the new one. Pay close attention to how much the cat is eating every day. When the cat acclimates to the suggested, high protein diet (fed in small amounts frequently during the day), weigh the cat at four-week intervals. If there is no weight loss at all, or even some weight gain, the amount of food you are allowing is simply too much. You may be thinking in human-sized portions, not feline. Remember the rule: Every three to four weeks reweigh your cat on the same scale each time so that accurate weight measurements are done. A fifteen-pound cat should not lose more than half a pound in four weeks. (Remember the Hepatic Lipidosis problem!)

Always be observant and report to your veterinarian any time a cat stops eating for two or more days. (That's one of the subtle problems with the "free choice" method of feeding. We often do not notice that the cat's food dish is still full until the cat is well into a fasting mode. When cats are sick the first clinical sign is often a loss of appetite, so a non-interactive, free choice feeding protocol provides less information to us than an interactive portion controlled feeding method.) Any cat that hasn't eaten in three days is in trouble! Seven days of fasting actually impairs the cat's immune system.

Once you have established a feeding plan that induces gradual weight loss over a period of months the cat will reach a point where weight maintenance occurs. At this optimal weight the cat should not "look fat" nor "look skinny". You'd be surprised how much more active and alert the cat will be at an optimum weight. You have successfully avoided the probability of Diabetes, arthritis and Hepatic Lipidosis. Your cat will probably live a few extra years and have a much better quality of life... and that will make you happy, too!

SUMMARY

To get a cat to lose weight, do the following after consulting with your veterinarian:

- 1) Have a thorough physical exam, lab tests, and accurate weight recorded. Be sure to rule out hypothyroidism or other metabolic disorders.
- 2) Feed less food than you have been.
- 3) Feed foods high in protein and fat and low in carbohydrate.
- 4) Feed small portions at intervals (2x to 4x per day) rather than continuous free access/ free choice.
- 5) Increase the cat's activity/exercise by enriching the cat's environment.
- 6) Reweigh the cat at three to four week intervals to assess your weight loss diet's progress.
- 7) Recalculate the total daily amount fed if weight gain

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or no weight loss is noted.
8.) Once the cat is at an ideal weight, adjust the total amount fed so that the cat's body weight remains stable.

NOTE: ABOUT RAISING KITTENS

Veterinary nutritionists suggest that we expose very young cats to a variety of food types and textures. Cats are staunch creatures of habit and if a kitten is raised on a dry food kibble diet only, the odds are high that it will reject any non-kibble diet later in life. (It might not even know what to do with a captured mouse!) Food preference can be set on canned food, too. As kittens are developing, be sure to provide a wide variety of food types, textures, and tastes so that later in life, if weight loss diets are required, you will be able to select a type and texture that will be in the cat's best interest. Read more about how to raise orphaned kittens [here](#).

Remember, high quality, meat-based food, control the amount fed, provide more exercise, and be persistent. Help your pet live a longer, leaner and more enjoyable life. Many types of dermatological problems are avoided if the dog or cat is consuming an optimum diet. In some cases, adding a supplement such as **DermCaps**, a popular Omega Fatty Acid supplement with a number of beneficial ingredients, is the key factor in avoiding repeated episodes of **Hot Spots** and other skin afflictions. If your dog or cat seems to lack good coat and skin health, consider upgrading the diet to a meat-based ingredient formula and adding a supplement such as DermCaps.

More links on Nutrition:

[Cats Are Different Nutrition Concepts](#) [Contrasting Grain-based and Meat-based Pet Foods](#)
[Fatty Acids](#) [Natural Pet Foods](#)
[The Veterinary Dog](#) [X-rays of some achilles cases](#)
[What Manages Cornerstone On feeding Issues](#)

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DIABETES MELLITUS IN DOGS AND CATS

Diabetes in the dog and cat and the treatment for diabetes mellitus are interesting and challenging topics. Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a disorder where the body is unable to regulate blood sugar levels. (There is another diastolic disease called Diabetes Insipidus that is associated with the pituitary gland.) Each case seems to be different, and regulating the diabetic dog or cat so that their blood glucose levels are as normal as possible is vitally important. The real problem with a diabetic dog or cat is that even in the presence of sugar (glucose) in the blood stream, something interferes with the entry of that sugar into the body's cells where it is required for the life sustaining energy of those cells. With no sugar in the cells, the cell dies in a very short period of time.

A highly complicated disease entity, diabetes has been classified according to what pathway of energy metabolism has been disrupted. Fortunately with diabetes mellitus in dogs and cats most cases can be managed successfully with insulin injections. There are several brands of insulin available to veterinarians and your veterinarian may suggest or favor one brand rather than another. Cats often are managed by use of a PZI (protamine zinc) insulin preparation. Do not be hasty with your dog or cat's veterinarian if you do not understand the how, why, and when of managing diabetes in dogs and cats.



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TYPES OF DIABETES MELLITUS (DM) IN DOGS AND CATS

Type I. Occurs when very little or no insulin is produced. In these cases, insulin must be administered by injection. Most diabetic dogs have what is termed "insulin dependent" diabetes. This means that insulin from an external source (injection of insulin) will be required for the dog's survival; dietary modification alone won't stabilize the blood sugar level.

CAUSE

In dogs... The cause is considered in most cases to be due to damage to the cells in the pancreas (called beta cells or islet cells) that produce insulin. Often the damage is due to an abnormal self-destruction of the cells by the body's own immune system action. This is termed "auto-immune destruction" or "immune mediated" damage.

In cats... The most common causes of diabetes in cats are obesity, pancreatitis, or immune mediated damage of the pancreatic beta cells.

Type II. Very rarely occurs in dogs and cats. In this type of diabetes the patient may be producing insulin but for various reasons the cells are not able to respond to the presence of insulin-glucose at the cell wall so that glucose carrying molecules are unable to enter the cells...so the energy from glucose is not available to the cell. This is termed "insulin resistance". The insulin is present but the cells are resistant to its vital effects in transporting glucose into the cell.

Transient DM. This occurs most often in cats where diabetic signs are variable. Some diabetic cats may even have periods where they no longer need insulin injections. These periods are unpredictable and blood sugar level tests may need to be done routinely and the cat watched closely for signs of re-emerging diabetes.

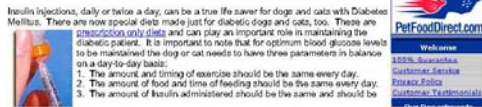
SIGNS OF DIABETES MELLITUS

Typical signs of diabetes mellitus in dogs and cats include excess water consumption and excess urination, increased appetite but with actual weight loss, and dehydration. Dogs also commonly develop cataracts whereas cats seldom develop cataracts secondary to diabetes mellitus.

- ...polyuria (PU) - frequent and more productive urination
- ...polydipsia (PD) - increased water intake
- ...polyphagia - excessive appetite
- ...weight loss
- ...lethargy
- ...sugar in the urine



Because there is such a buildup of sugar in the blood stream there is the sensation of thirst in the animal and so it drinks more water to "dilute" the blood. PD (polydipsia) is the result...the animal drinks excessive amounts of water. Of course the animal then needs to urinate more often and greater than normal amounts. This increased urination is called PU (polyuria). Weight loss occurs even in the presence of an increased appetite because the carbohydrate consumed cannot be used for energy or stored as fat and because the animal metabolizes its own fat and tissue proteins for energy instead of utilizing the dietary carbohydrates. If left untreated, Diabetes Mellitus leads to muscle wasting, depression, vomiting, kidney failure and death. Some dogs develop cataracts quite rapidly and this is another sign that may lead to getting the animal in for an examination by the veterinarian. In cats, often the owner will notice a wobbly gait or weakness in walking or jumping. Muscle wasting and weakness are commonly seen in diabetic cats.



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diabetes was and for the discovery of insulin and its purification from the pancreases of slaughtered meat animals for use in treating diabetes. Now, people look forward to advances on the medical horizon such as pancreatic islet cell transplantation, potential growth of pancreatic islet cells from stem cell research, or assistance from pigs cloned to have cells missing the rejection markers. What this will mean for treatment possibilities in dogs is still unknown.

Keep in mind that any animal that is being treated with insulin for Diabetes Mellitus should have a structured lifestyle. That means the patients should get about the same amount of exercise every day, eat about the same amount of food and at about the same time each day, and then the insulin dose can be regulated consistently every day. If you change any one of the three variables (exercise, calorie intake, insulin dose) it has an effect on the blood sugar levels. Normally, a dog's blood sugar varies between 70 and 120 mg/dL. A cat's normal blood sugar has a wider normal range and can be between 70 and 180 mg/dL. Learn more about dog and cat [diabetic blood sugar](#) here. Consistency in the patient's lifestyle will greatly assist proper dosing of insulin and result in a happier, healthier pet.

ThePetCheckup... This unique, in-home health test (includes the indication of sugar in the urine) for dogs and cats may revolutionize pet health awareness! Learn More

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given at the same time each day.

If any one of these three parameters are different on any given day, the requirements of the other two parameters will be different. For example, if a patient gets the usual amount of exercise today as normal but happens not to eat its usual meal, then the patient may need considerably less insulin in that day's injection. If you have already administered the insulin you can't take it back! If the usual amount of insulin is given and the pet doesn't eat its routine meal, the pet may become hypoglycemic and develop signs of low blood sugar. Keeping the diabetic pet regulated in the three areas detailed above will enhance the animal's quality of life.

LOW BLOOD SUGAR...Hypoglycemia (Insulin Shock)

If an animal's blood sugar level becomes so low that the energy needs of the cells are not met, the cells begin to suffer and lose their ability to function. Especially true with nerve and muscle cells that have high respiratory rates and that need continuous oxygen and glucose for survival, a lack of glucose results in rapid deterioration of function. The usual signs in a dog that the blood sugar level is too low are trembling, agitation and muscle incoordination. Ultimately a seizure may occur. In cats, behavior muscle tremors and weakness are seen. These animals need a quick source of energy in the form of carbohydrates and will not survive hypoglycemia if oral or intravenous sugars are not administered. Any diabetic dog or cat should be closely monitored for signs of hypoglycemia, especially if the animal vomits or skips a meal and insulin has been administered. The insulin will drive much of the circulating glucose into the cells and if there is no recent dietary source of additional glucose, hypoglycemia may result. As well, if the diabetic animal engages in an unusual session of vigorous physical activity, it may deplete the glucose stores in the body and become hypoglycemic.

TREATMENT FOR DIABETES

NOTE: Each case is different and requires careful individual assessment by a veterinarian. The following presentation is one veterinarian's summary of Insulin Therapy. It is written by a veterinarian who also happens to be a diabetic. Your veterinarian's suggestions and recommendations may vary significantly from this discussion.

Generally start canine patients with NPH insulin at 1/2 unit per pound of body weight twice daily with twice daily feeding. Ideally, one can generate an insulin response curve with the NPH, but its general action is over the course of twelve hours. It's always best to try to regulate a dog on his own home schedule and activity, so frequent blood glucose checking in the early weeks after diagnosis is important. Usually client education on diet and exercise, and problems with treating anxiety (both the owner's and the dog's), feeding and dosing schedule can be discussed and accommodated in these first few weeks after the diagnosis of diabetes is made.

Dogs that are presented with diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) is a dangerous situation where the patient has been afflicted with diabetes for some time and the body chemistry is way off balance. Ketoacidosis results from utilization of body protein sources such as muscle for energy because glucose is unable to be utilized. These patients are often treated with the fast acting insulins. This does require more frequent blood glucose checking (hourly or every 2 hours) to avoid hypoglycemia until stable normal glucose levels are reached and maintained, the dog feels better and accompanying medical concerns are addressed. The most commonly available insulin today are the "human insulins" made with recombinant DNA processes to more closely resemble the human insulin molecules. Dog insulin is more similar to the pork and beef insulins of insulin, which still can be available from pharmacies, but require specific a request to obtain them.

Follow-up glucose checking on dogs that appear to be doing well is recommended about every two to three months. Some owners have obtained their own glucose meters to more closely follow their dog's blood sugar levels at home. Generally, the complications from diabetes that humans are concerned about such as nephropathy (kidney disease), retinopathy (damage to the back lining of the inside the eye), and nerve disease occur over many years. Most dogs do not have a natural life span long enough to expect these sorts of complications. Cataracts (lens pathology) in dogs subsequent to diabetes is quite common, though, and may need to be surgically removed if vision is impaired.

Experimentation with dogs was essential in the early 20th century for an understanding of what

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THE OVERWEIGHT PET

BREAKING NEWS! A new weight loss medication for dogs! Learn more [here](#)

A recent survey indicated that 40% of America's pet population is overweight. If you or your veterinarian feel that your pet would benefit from a reduction in body weight, this discussion should help you to understand how to help overweight dogs lose weight. Weight loss for obese cats is more complicated and should not be done without a veterinarian's supervision.

Very simply put, if your pet is overweight it is taking in (feeling more) calories than it needs. Set all excuses aside...excessive weight in an otherwise healthy pet is a direct result of consuming unnecessary amounts of food. If your pet is overweight it should be examined for heart, thyroid or other metabolic disorders. A detailed history should be taken with emphasis on frequency of exercise, amount and type of food being provided and other parameters relative to calorie requirements.

To begin let us set the record straight on some common misconceptions regarding obesity. Healthy dogs and cats do not need to eat every day, the pet food industry has painted the picture for us of the "lazier eater". The impression is that a happy, healthy pet will eat every meal with gusto. Please do not try to entice your pet to eat if it isn't interested. If you provide a good quality food and a liberal amount of water, your pet will eat when it wants and do better than having to eat when you want. See the [pet nutrition section](#).

Another common myth maintains that spaying or neutering causes obesity. This is absolutely false. Any pet, spayed or not, will gain weight if it is over fed relative to its energy requirements. The surgical procedure may slightly slow the pet's metabolism, as will normal aging, and it will then burn calories off more slowly; therefore it may require less food. Keep in mind the surgery doesn't cause the weight gain, eating too much does and you have



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control over that.

The following discussion pertains to **DOGS ONLY**. Because of metabolic idiosyncrasies that are different from the dog's, putting a cat on a reducing diet should never be done without the close supervision of a veterinarian. Cats are prone to developing a dangerous condition called **Hepatic Lipidosis** if their caloric intake is suddenly restricted. Read the articles about **FELINE OBESITY** and **HOW TO GET A CAT TO REDUCE WEIGHT**.

Let us explore four typical settings we veterinarians encounter when presented with a pet that is overweight. See if any of these sound familiar! The quotes are the usual responses pet owners give us when we politely suggest that perhaps your pet would benefit by losing some weight...



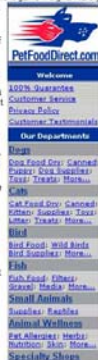
Type I: THE NIBBLER: "But doctor, she hardly eats a thing." (My first thought is that whatever she is eating, it is too much!) This pet probably has food out for it all day and nibbles a little at a time. When dinner time comes and the pet picks at the left-over, it will take the choicest morsels, leave the rest, and still appear not to have eaten very much. However over a 24 hour period "THE NIBBLERS" total caloric intake is excessive and it gains weight. Hardly eats a thing, eh?

Type II: THE BEGGAR: "But doctor, this animal won't keep quiet unless she gets her treat. And she won't go to sleep at night until she gets her little dish of ice cream." What has happened here is that the pet has discovered that the more noise and fussing it produces the more likely it is to be rewarded for this behavior. The owner finally "gives in" to keep the pet quiet and the pet sees the food as a reward. In effect the owner is training "The Beggar" by rewarding its behavior. It turns into a fun game but the pet's health may suffer if obesity is the result.

Type III: THE GOOD DOG: "But doctor, she's such a good dog we don't want her to go hungry." This pet became overweight because the owner's signal of affection for their pet has focused on feeding. (Usually each family member secretly offers treats to the pet...and doesn't know the other family members are doing exactly the same thing!) It is an understandable trait but unfortunately for the pet it can be a case of too much of a good thing. The owner's method of showing affection should be directed more toward physical activity than feeding. Think "FETCH" not "FOOD!"

Type IV: THE GOURMET DOG: "But doctor, she just refuses to eat dog food." In this case the pet has been trained to owners to feed it such things as chicken, liver, ice cream, cookies, etc. Although most table scraps are just fine to feed, (stay away from bones of any kind!) this pet has been given a choice of what it wants to eat and has chosen certain people food. If a child is given a choice it would probably choose cake and candy over vegetables, and its health would suffer. This Gourmet Dog usually overeats because it isn't getting a proper balance of nutrition, plus everything tastes so good there is a reward factor in eating. The solution is... you choose, not your pet.

What To Do About An Overweight Dog



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(Be sure your veterinarian evaluates **Thyroid Gland** function in any overweight dog or cat. Hypothyroidism is a very common instigator of excess weight in pets and this needs to be corrected or your attempts to reduce your pet's weight will probably fail. So even if your veterinarian says thinks your dog doesn't "look like a Hypothyroid animal," request the blood test for hypothyroidism anyway. I have been fooled often enough to make it a standard practice in every overweight pet I am working with. Dr. Dunn.)

First of all remember that research has shown that, in general, a healthy dog can obtain from food for five days before any noticeable health effects occur. They generally don't HAVE to eat every day. (Very small breeds are an exception...but unless there's really some medical problem present, missing a day of eating isn't a major catastrophe.) Always be sure fresh water is available. So start out by feeding a very high quality, complete and balanced dog food. Look on the ingredients list. MEAT should be the first item listed, not corn. You may also want to supplement with a vitamin/mineral/fatty acid product. PetFoodDirect.com has some excellent products...search for **SUPPLEMENTS**. Be careful about over supplementing, too!

Now record an accurate pre-diet weight. Reduce by one-third your pet's total daily ration previously given. Include in this total all treats, snacks, or left-overs if you insist on continuing to provide these. Reweigh the pet in 2 weeks. (Remember if the pet begs for food, that's a good sign! But don't give in. Read again if you have to about Type II)

If you find upon weighing your pet after two weeks that it has lost even a little weight, you're on the right track; keep up this schedule! If no weight loss is evident, again reduce by one-third the amount being fed. Weigh the pet again in two weeks. Depending upon the results either keep feeding this amount or reduce again by one-third the total amount being fed. If you persist a good outcome is certain. Many veterinarians believe you should not feed the "Reduced Calorie" or "Low Diet" or "Senior Diets". These diets have very restricted fat levels to reduce the calories but by necessity have increased the carbohydrate percentage. This increased carbohydrate stimulates additional insulin secretion which tells the body to store unused calories as fat. There are a multitude of overweight dogs that have actually gained weight on these "Reduced Calorie" weight loss diets. Your dog needs a meat-based diet, high in protein (which isn't stored as fat) and low in carbohydrates. Now...YOU have to adjust the quantity being fed to achieve a state where the dog takes in fewer total calories than it is using for the day's energy requirements. Simple!

It is also quite important to get everyone's cooperation in restricting the pet's intake. There is usually someone in the household who feeds sorry for the dieting pet and surreptitiously provides "just a little" something extra. More helpful would be for the person to take the pet for a walk or a run to burn off a few calories.

Keep in mind most overweight pets have a slow metabolism. They simply don't burn off those calories very fast and in fact don't generally have "hunger" appetites. Because of this slow metabolism, though, they don't require very much; so "just a little extra" will make a big difference over a period of time.

Remember, high quality, meat-based food, control the amount fed, provide more exercise, and be persistent. Help your pet live a longer, leaner and more enjoyable life. Many types of dermatological problems are avoided if the dog or cat is consuming an optimum diet. In some cases, adding a supplement such as **DemCap**, a popular Omega Fatty Acid supplement with a number of beneficial ingredients, is the key factor in avoiding repeated episodes of Hot Spots and other skin afflictions. If your dog or cat seems to lack good coat and skin health, consider upgrading the diet to a meat-based ingredient formula and adding a supplement such as DemCap.

More topics on Nutrition:

[Obesity in Cats:](#) Feline obesity seems to be an epidemic! Find out what you can do about the overweight cat.

[Cats Are Different:](#) Grain-based/Meat-based

[Natural Pet Foods:](#) Nutrition, Basic Principles

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Pet Obesity is a Growing Concern

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Pet Column for the week of January 5, 2004

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Obesity is not just a problem in people; pets are packing on the pounds too! A recent report from the National Academy of Science shows that one in four pets is overweight or obese. This problem can no longer be ignored!

How much does a fat pet weigh?

"Putting your pet on the scale is not the best way to evaluate if the pet is overweight," explains Dr. Christine Merle, a small animal Extension veterinarian formerly with the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine in Urbana. "There is a tremendous amount of individual variation in an animal's ideal weight. It is better to look at the appearance of each animal rather than at a weight that this breed or type of animal should be. Looking at the animal's body condition is the best way to judge where your pet falls on the obesity spectrum."

Body condition scores are most commonly rated on a 5- or 9-point scale, with the middle of the scale designated ideal. The pet is scored by looking at its build, the amount of fat overlying its ribs, and its "waist." Breed, age, sex, and type of lifestyle are minor factors noted.

You should be able to feel your pet's ribs easily without pressing, but you should not be able to see the ribs through the coat. There should be a "tuck in" in the abdominal area. Your pet's torso, viewed from above, should resemble an hourglass. You can conduct these quick checks, but since it's hard for owners to be objective, it's best to seek your veterinarian's advice.

"Since more pets are overweight, we have become accustomed to seeing pets who weigh more than is ideal. The norm now seems to be several pounds overweight. Often if a pet is lean, owners think the pet is starving. However, studies show that lean pets have fewer health problems and an increased life span of up to 2 years!" states Dr. Merle.

An overweight pet is not a healthy pet. Owners need to recognize that they are putting their pet's health at risk by allowing that extra weight. Obesity commonly leads to diabetes, heart problems, and arthritis. An overweight pet does not age well, either. Overweight pets are more prone to hip dysplasia, back and joint pain, and endocrine diseases. Extra weight also decreases a veterinarian's ability to manage these conditions both medically and surgically. Keeping Fluffy at a healthy weight can literally add years to

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her life.

Why are more pets overweight? The answer is the same for pets as well as people: too many calories and not enough exercise. "The most common reason for overfeeding is that owners want to show their pet they care and one way is to give a treat. One extra treat can turn into 5 and then 10. Be aware exactly how much you are feeding your pet," advises Dr. Merle.

It can be a challenge deciding how much is the right amount to feed your pet. What's listed on the bag is for the average pet, but lifestyle, activity level, and age also affect how much food a pet needs. If your pet is overweight, feed less than what the bag says and adjust from there. Remember that treats reduce the amount of food required at each meal.

If given the chance most animals will eat more than they need. Talk to your veterinarian to figure out the ideal weight for your pet, then monitor your pet's weight with weekly or monthly "rib checks" or weigh ins. Never start your pet on a diet without consulting your veterinarian.

"Prevention is really the key. It is very hard to get pets to lose weight, especially if it is an arthritic pet that cannot exercise. Keeping animals at a steady weight is a much easier task. If you are faced with an obese pet, first rule out medical reasons for being overweight. Then simply decrease calories in the diet and increase exercise. An extra motivation is that people who lose weight together with their pet are more likely to keep it off," notes Dr. Merle.

Working with a veterinarian is the best way to formulate a healthy diet for you pet, determine your pet's ideal weight, and create a weight loss plan. Contact your local veterinarian if your pet is overweight.

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