

11 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DOGS' LIFESTYLE AND OBESITY

F. Bevilacqua¹, R. Ricci², S. Binato², B. Contiero², M. Diez³

¹Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, ²Department of Animal Science, University of Padova, Italy, ³Department of Animal Production, University of Liège, Belgium

Objectives: Aim of this study was to evaluate the relationship between dogs' lifestyle and body condition score (BCS) in a group of 43 owned-dogs.

Methods: Dogs were submitted to body weight (BW) and BCS (5 points scale) while owners were interviewed on dogs' history (dogs joined the family before or after 6 months of age; dogs started to gain weight before 2 years of age, between 2 and 7, after 7) and lifestyle including feeding habits (type of food consumed, use of treats, number of meals/day, adopted feeding regimen and presence of other dogs during meals), environmental conditions (living indoor or outdoor) and physical activity (minutes/day: 0, <30, 30-60, >60). A relationship between all these parameters and BCS was investigated.

Results: Fourteen dogs were scored BCS 3, 14 BCS 4 and 15 BCS 5. No relationship was found between BCS and the history of the dogs. BCS was neither related to the type of diet consumed nor with the type of commercial food offered. Number of meals per day and use of treats did not influence BCS. Similarly, obesity was affected neither to the presence of other dogs during meal-time nor to the environmental conditions. On the contrary, *ad libitum* feeding had a significant effect on BCS ($P < 0.001$): 87% of obese and 78% of overweight dogs were daily provided with not quantified amount of food, whereas 57% of owners of dogs scoring BCS 3 carefully weigh food. Time devoted to daily physical activity was in strict relationship with BCS, dogs spending >60 minutes/day being 71% of BCS 3-dogs vs 7% of BCS 4-dogs vs 7% of BCS 5-dogs ($P < 0.001$).

Conclusions: To counteract canine obesity, owners should weigh meals offered to dogs and provide not less than 60 minutes of physical activity per day.