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## **Spring is Here. Time to Go Outside!**

After a long hard Minnesota winter, it is time to shed the winter jackets and enjoy the outdoors. Our pets enjoy being outside just as much as we do. This is a good time of year to work on our goals for weight loss for our pets to help increase their life span and their total health.

### **Start with Walking**

Just like people, an unfit pet can over exert themselves while exercising. This can cause muscle strains and ligament tears in your pet. Even if your pet is ready and wants to run for miles, this does not necessarily mean that we should let them. Start building your pet's muscles with short exercise sessions, and gradually increase the length of exercise time every day. Leash walking is a good starting point along with swimming.

### **Medication to control Pain**

If your pet is resistant to exercise, they may be in pain. Talk to your veterinarian about adding in a glucosamine supplement or pet pain medication to address any pain issues your veterinarian might discover. This can help them control the pain, which allow your pet to be more willing to exercise. As a pet loses weight, this takes stress off the joints and they should require less pain control from medications. For pets that don't want to exercise, start small, even a short walk to the mailbox and back is a starting point. After a couple days, now you can try 2-3 trips back and forth to the mailbox. Only use pain medications prescribed by your veterinarian. Many of the common medications people take can have serious side effects on pet's organs.

### **Watch the Extra Calories**

An important part of weight loss is feeding and calorie control. Be aware of all the extra things that can easily be decreased or cut out of your pet's diet, including dog treats, people food, rawhides, pigs ears other chews or the unintended garbage your pet gets into. Your veterinarian can create a safe weight loss feeding plan for your pet. Often, veterinary diets are an important part in achieving the weight loss goal and achieving a safe weight in a safe manner.

Perhaps you do not have time to spend as much quality time outside with your pet as you would like. Sign your pet up for Dog Daycare at ZimmVet. They get to play with other dogs in our huge outdoor exercise facility, which will be expanded this spring.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.