

FITNESS - FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It seems like the whole world is on a DIET!!

I recently read an article about eating habits the world over and one sentence stuck – a person from Japan stated, “Eat only until you are 80% full.” That was certainly food for thought for me!

Then, shortly thereafter, I read an article about lean dogs and how they run faster. As an agility competitor, that caught my eye! This article quoted a study published in the *American Journal of Veterinary Research (Vol. 66, No. 6)* showing that racing Greyhounds restricted to 85% of their free fed food amount resulted in a 6% loss of weight; however, they turned in *significantly faster times* in their sprints.

In the performance arena, years of carrying extra weight around can add up, I feel. Besides slowing a dog down and making life harder for them in general, damage to joints and tendons may incur. A pound or two here and there is much more dangerous than a pound or two on us! For example, say a 15 pound Miniature Schnauzer is 1.5 pounds overweight. That translates to 10% above its perfect weight. Not bad you'd say, but another way to look at this is to picture a 150 pound person carrying around a 15 pound bowling ball day and night. This is not a nice picture!

Schnauzers are masters at training us to give them treats and snacks, and we love to comply with their wishes, but I don't feel that they know or care what size that treat is!! Little snacks go so much further and you can give more of them when they are tiny!

A good way to check the weight of our Minis is to stand above them and look down at their back and see if they have a waistline. The body should not go straight back, but curve a bit. Next, place your hands on both sides of the dog's rib carriage very gently. Can you feel the ribs or do you have to press in to get thru the skin to find the ribs? If you have to press to feel the ribs, you need to consider putting “Schatzie” on a diet! By all means, talk to your vet if you are uncertain. I feel that Veterinarians are much more educated today than a few years back and they realize that an overweight dog is “an accident waiting to happen” health wise. I also see Weight Charts in vets office now on a regular basis. That chart will help explain what to look for in your dog.

A lean dog also enjoys an extended life span in most cases and what more could we want for our best friends. Thin plus exercise equals a happy, healthy and fit Mini!

Lynn Baitinger