



Body Condition Score Visual Guide

How to assess your dog's body condition at home

PETSLIKEMINE
ARTHRITIS & MSK SPACE

PET NAME	BREED	CURRENT WEIGHT	TARGET WEIGHT

Body condition scoring is the most reliable way to assess whether your dog is at a healthy weight. It looks beyond the number on the scale to body composition — how much fat covers the ribs, whether there's a defined waist, and whether the abdomen tucks up toward the hips. Use this guide alongside the physical checks below. **Most owners underestimate their dog's score by one or two points.**

	Target				
4	5	6	7	8	9
LEAN	IDEAL	SLIGHTLY OVERWEIGHT	OVERWEIGHT	OBESE	GROSSLY OBESE
Ribs slightly visible. Prominent waist. Marked abdominal tuck.	Ribs palpable with light pressure. Waist visible from above. Slight abdominal tuck.	Slight fat cover over ribs. Less defined waist. Minimal tuck.	Ribs difficult to feel. Waist barely visible from above. Abdominal distension.	Ribs not palpable under fat. No waist. Obvious abdominal distension.	Massive fat over chest and spine. No waist. Distended abdomen. Fat deposits on legs.

HOW TO ASSESS YOUR DOG

- 1 Look from above.** Stand behind your dog. You should see a clear waist that narrows behind the ribs. If your dog is wider behind the ribs than at the hips, they are overweight.
- 2 Feel the ribs.** Run your hands lightly along their sides. With light pressure you should feel each rib, like running your fingers over the back of your hand — the bones easy to find under a thin covering. If the ribs feel sharp like your knuckles, your dog is too thin. If you have to press to find them, like feeling for the bones through your palm, there is too much fat.
- 3 Look from the side.** A healthy dog has an abdominal tuck — the belly rises from the bottom of the ribs up toward the hips. If the belly hangs straight or droops, they are overweight.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ARTHRITIS

Every kilogram of excess weight on an arthritic dog increases joint loading and pain. Weight loss alone — without any other treatment — produces measurable improvement in lameness for overweight dogs. **Aim for BCS 5.** If you're not there, your vet can help plan a realistic weight loss programme.

How to use. Pin this guide somewhere you'll see it daily — a kitchen wall, the fridge, inside a cupboard. Check your dog's score monthly. Re-weigh and compare to the chart. Bring this sheet to vet appointments so you and your vet are working from the same scoring system.

MOST OWNERS UNDERESTIMATE. BE HONEST.