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Press Release

For immediate release

PETS' WEIGHT GAIN OVER THE HOLIDAYS CAN PUT THEM AT RISK

Calabash, NC—November 14, 2007. Just like their owners, cats and dogs tend to gain weight between Thanksgiving and the New Year. So you may want to think twice before giving your pets special holiday treats this season. An estimated 45% of the 130 million pets in the United States are overweight or obese, putting them at risk for diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, and cancer.

Just how much weight gain those holiday treats can carry was quantified in a recent study conducted by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP). The study followed 21 healthy adult dogs and 11 cats that were weighed October 1 to November 15, 2006 and re-weighed January 15 to February 28, 2007. The dogs included in the study gained an average of 0.3 pounds and cats added 0.37 pounds. The age range for dogs in the study was 2 to 14 years of age with a median age of 7.8 years, and cats were 1 to 16 years with a median age of 7.6.

According to APOP's founder, Dr. Ernie Ward of Calabash, North Carolina, each pound of weight on a dog is equivalent to 5 to 7 pounds on a person, and each pound gained on a cat equals 7 to 10 pounds. This equates to a person gaining 1 to 2 pounds during the holiday season, which is what previous studies done on humans have found.

Dr. Ward advises pet owners to watch portion sizes and avoid high-calorie treats during the holidays. "We want our pets to share in our celebrations and often confuse affection with confection. Those extra calories add pounds that put our pet loved ones at greater risk for developing type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis, high blood pressure, and heart disease." Ward recommends offering healthy treat alternatives for dogs, including carrots, broccoli, apples, and celery. "While it's challenging to lose weight or diet during the holidays for many, our goal should be to maintain our current weight by making responsible, healthy food choices for both ourselves and our pets."

About the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention:

Founded in 2005, the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) is a group of veterinarians and veterinary healthcare experts dedicated to reducing the pet obesity epidemic. By raising awareness of the dangers of pet obesity and providing obesity prevention and weight loss techniques, their goal is to enhance the well-being of pet loved ones. A key component of APOP's mission is to develop and promote parallel weight loss programs designed to help pet owners lose weight alongside their pets.

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