

Discoveries

Tackling Obesity in Dogs

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As a new year begins, many people make – and break – New Year’s resolutions regarding their weight and health. Setting aside any judgments on this practice, maintaining your dog at a healthy weight is always a worthy commitment. According to a 2022 survey by the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, 59% of U.S. dogs are estimated to be overweight or obese.

This staggering statistic has significant implications for canine health. In dogs, as in humans, obesity is an inflammatory condition that affects the heart, joints, kidneys, and skin, and even contributes to the development of cancer. Addressing obesity first reduces fatty tissue levels and the associated inflammation, which can lead to the improvement or resolution of other health issues.

Obesity can even impact a dog’s lifespan. A laboratory study¹ by Nestle Purina Petcare showed that Labrador Retrievers fed 25% less than their free-fed littermates developed chronic diseases such as arthritis at a later age and lived up to two years longer. A more recent study² of North American pet dogs also found that healthy-weight dogs outlived their overweight peers by up to two and a half years. Since we all want to spend more quality time with our beloved dogs, prioritizing a healthy weight is essential to ensuring a longer, happier life together.

If your dog is already overweight, decreased calorie intake and increased exercise are the mainstay of an effective treatment plan. Since this approach takes time and dedication from the owner and the veterinary team, scientists are looking for additional tools to help dogs achieve a healthy weight faster.

One promising avenue is being studied at The Ohio State University where AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF)-funded researchers are investigating

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January 25-26

AKC Meet the Breeds
New York, NY

February 10-11

Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show
New York, NY

March 21-23

SAVMA Symposium
Davis, CA

April 7-10

Joint Symposium for Working Canines
Peachtree City, GA

Upcoming Webinars

Stay tuned for our 2025 webinar schedule at akcCHF.org/webinars.

Tackling Obesity in Dogs *continued*

fecal microbiota transplantation (FMT) (*CHF Grant 02723: Scientific and Clinical Assessment of Fecal Microbiota Transplant in Obese Dogs: SLIM Study*). The intestinal microbiota—a community of bacteria, fungi, and other microscopic organisms in the digestive tract—plays a significant role in metabolism and weight management. Studies in humans and rodents suggest that the intestinal microbiota contributes to obesity and weight management. FMT aims to transfer microbes that promote a lean body weight into overweight dogs, offering a novel approach to treating obesity.

“Obesity is a disease. We need to treat it as such and give it the appropriate level of attention,” says Principal Investigator Dr. Janessa Winston.

The SLIM Study is just one example of CHF-funded research working to develop more effective treatment and prevention strategies for canine diseases like obesity. Learn more about this important work at akcchf.org/research.

1. Kealy RD, Lawler DF, Ballam JM, Mantz SL, Biery DN, Greeley EH, Lust G, Segre M, Smith GK, Stowe HD. Effects of diet restriction on life span and age-related changes in dogs. *J Am Vet Med Assoc*. 2002 May 1;220(9): 1315-1320. <https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.2002.220.1315>.
2. Salt C, Morris PJ, Wilson D, Lund EM, German AJ. Association between life span and body condition in neutered client-owned dogs. *J Vet Intern Med*. 2019; 33: 89–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jvim.15367>

30 Years Advancing Canine Health

In 2025, the AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF) celebrates 30 years of advancing canine health! Since its founding in 1995, CHF has invested more than \$75 million in canine health research, educational grants, and canine health projects – all to help dogs live longer, healthier lives.

CHF-funded researchers have explored the mechanisms of canine disease, providing more accurate diagnostic tests, new treatments, and genetic tests to help manage heritable diseases. Significant breakthroughs have been made in areas such as stationary night blindness, cancer, degenerative myelopathy, the health of search rescue dogs, and much more. This work has been fueled by generous donor support and the dedication of participating dogs, dog owners, and veterinary professionals.

Educational grants have encouraged scientists to pursue careers in canine health research and trained specialized veterinarians in reproductive or sports medicine. These programs ensure that skilled professionals are available to meet the evolving health needs of current and future generations of dogs.

Looking ahead, we are excited to unveil a refreshed image for CHF and a renewed commitment to sharing health information. The Foundation and its staff, in collaboration with the scientific community, are dedicated to improving the health of all dogs through knowledge and discovery. With compassion, connection, and scientific rigor, we will continue to find and fund scientific studies with the most potential to help dogs. Thank you to everyone who has inspired and supported us, both in the past and moving forward!



2024 AKC Canine Health Foundation Awards

The AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF) presents the President's Award annually to a person or organization that has made an exceptional contribution to advancing canine health. This year's recipients are **Dr. J. Charles and Lynn Garvin**. The Garvins have demonstrated a lifelong dedication to advancing canine health, the Dalmatian breed, and community service. Dr. Garvin has been a CHF Board Member since 2007 and was chairman from 2016-2023. He is also a current member of the AKC Board of Directors and works diligently with the AKC Purebred Preservation Bank. Dr. Garvin and Lynn Garvin have bred over 90 champion Dalmatians. Mrs. Garvin currently serves as an AKC Delegate for the Marion Ohio Kennel Club and is a longtime supporter of CHF.

The Distinguished Research Partner Award is given annually to clubs or organizations for their ongoing and outstanding commitment to supporting canine health research. This year's recipients are the **Golden Retriever Foundation®** and **MB-F, Inc.**



- The Golden Retriever Foundation has had a longstanding partnership with CHF, supporting decades of research with wide-reaching significance. Most recently, their advocacy prompted the investigation of an emerging respiratory disease in dogs. Their support also helped to launch, and quickly expand, funding for a canine sports medicine and rehabilitation residency program which will benefit both current and future generations of dogs.



- MB-F, Inc. has consistently supported CHF and its mission. Tom Crowe, the founder of MB-F and a member of the inaugural CHF board, created the MB-F Star Dogs Program through which 301 clubs and thousands of club members have donated to CHF.

Awards were presented at the Canines & Cocktails gala in Orlando, FL on December 12, 2024.

Thank you to our 2024 Canines & Cocktails Sponsors!

Thank you to everyone who helped us celebrate achievements in canine health research at the Canines & Cocktails gala in Orlando, Florida. Your enthusiasm and dedication to the AKC Canine Health Foundation's mission help ensure a healthier future for all dogs.

Special thanks to our many generous sponsors listed below. We also thank our dedicated event committee chairs, Dr. and Mrs. William Truesdale, whose ongoing philanthropic commitment to the AKC Canine Health Foundation makes this event a success year after year.

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MISSION: The AKC Canine Health Foundation's mission is to improve the health of all dogs through knowledge and discovery.

2025 Clinician-Scientist Fellow

Established in 2013, the AKC Canine Health Foundation's Clinician-Scientist Fellowship Program encourages and supports the next generation of canine health researchers to sustain future advancements in canine health. Visit akcchf.org/clinsci for more information.



The 2025 Fellow is:

Selvi Jegatheeson, BSc (Hon), DVM, MVS, MVSc (Clinical), MANZCVS (Small Animal Medicine), FANZCVS (Veterinary Oncology) (CHF Grant 03398-E)

Mentors: Paul Neeson, PhD, FFSc (RCPA); University of Melbourne and Nicola Mason, BVetMed, PhD; Penn Vet

Dr. Jegatheeson earned her veterinary degree and completed a veterinary medical oncology internship and residency at the University of Melbourne. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Melbourne's Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

Under the mentorship of Drs. Neeson and Mason, Dr. Jegatheeson will study a type of immunotherapy, known as Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR)-T cell therapy, for the treatment of solid cancers in people and dogs. Her work will build upon our knowledge of cancer immunotherapy and hopefully improve treatment options for tumors such as bone cancer.

This fellowship is generously sponsored by owners Carolyn and Gary Koch along with breeders Kristy and Kevin Ratliff in honor of "Rumble," GCHP Hill Country's Let's Get Ready To Rumble (akcchf.org/rumble).

Recent CHF Grant Highlights

Grant 03321-A: Ehrlichiosis and Hemostasis: Uncovering the Molecular Pathophysiology of Perioperative Bleeding in *Ehrlichia canis*-positive Dogs through Comparative Transcriptomics

Principal Investigator: Amanda Duarte Barbosa, BVetMed, PhD; Murdoch University

Seeks to determine why dogs infected with the tick-borne disease *Ehrlichia canis* sometimes have severe, or even fatal, bleeding during routine surgery.

Grant 03300: Probiotic Prevention of GI Hyperpermeability and Metabolome Disturbances in Dogs with Multicentric Lymphoma Undergoing Multi-drug Chemotherapy

Principal Investigator: Maria C Jugan, DVM, MS, DACVIM; Kansas State University

Evaluates the impact of a probiotic on preventing and treating gastrointestinal toxicity secondary to chemotherapy in dogs with lymphoma.

Grant 03274: Multimodal Quantification of Mitral Regurgitation in Dogs with Myxomatous Mitral Valve Disease

Principal Investigator: Ryan Fries, DVM, DACVIM (Cardiology), DECVIM-CA (Cardiology); University of Illinois

Compares different imaging methods to assess mitral valve disease severity, which will help clinicians decide when more advanced treatments like surgery are needed.

See our full research grants portfolio at akcchf.org/research.

How You Can Help

Support the AKC Canine Health Foundation to help find better treatments, more accurate diagnoses, and an improved understanding of the mechanisms that cause disease in dogs. Whatever your capacity to give, there is a way for you to help. Learn more at akcchf.org/how-to-help.



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