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Why Your Cat is Fat, Sick and Unhappy

Tue, 2008-01-15 15:53 — Robin Olson

I just got back from a 2-hour visit with Dr. Larry. He's my Vet. I love Dr. Larry. He might as well be my own brother; the one I wish I had. I'm paying for his kids college education, considering my monthly tab at Maple Ridge Animal Clinic. I might as well be considered family!

This visit was for Spencer and Gracie. Barely two months ago, I brought them both in for a checkup. Spencer was viciously attacking Gracie and her daughter, Petunia. It was terrifying and upsetting. I thought Spencer was suffering from some sort of health issue and had to rule it out before I started working on possible (yet again) behavior issues.

What I found was that Spencer was simply STARVING. Yes. I said, STARVING. He was SO hungry, he was furious. To better vent his anger, Spencer went after the two most submissive cats. ^[1]



No kidding. Spencer had dropped over 2 pounds in a few months! This is VERY dangerous, indeed. Cat's metabolisms are sensitive to changes like this, which is why it's tough to put them on a diet. They can get [Hepatic Lipidosis](#) ^[2] and die pretty quickly if it isn't treated right away.

What was causing Spencer's weight loss? ME! ME! It was my fault!

If I didn't act quickly, Spencer could DIE.

...1 year earlier...

I started the cats on a new feeding regime. I've been doing a lot of reading and research and now that I have [Dr. Pierson's](#) ^[3] invaluable information, I am ready to make a new start. Most of my cats are overweight; one cat has FIV and diabetes, one cat has breathing problems, one cat has crystals in her urine, one

had to have surgery because his urinary tract kept blocking up over and over. I've been feeding them really high quality dry food, but I'm going to switch them over to canned, NO GRAIN and see how they do.

Why?

Because cats are carnivores! DUH! Why would you feed a cat, rice, wheat, soy, corn? They can't digest it. Their digestive tract is too short to handle it, so it either goes to waste or it causes them to have health problems. Ideally, they should have a mouse a day. That's their perfect food.

Not being willing to provide vermin for dinner, and feeding RAW (bones and raw meat and vitamins) seemed out of the question, the next best was canned food. No dry. I don't care what you think about it being better for their teeth-it isn't. It sticks more than wet and makes them drink a TON of water.

I won't "dis" a brand of cat food (unless it's just total crap), but this one brand was not well loved by my cats. Regardless, it was good for them, I knew it would take time for them to adjust, so every day I put less and less dry in their bowls and more and more canned. I sprinkled additives on the wet food to make it more yummy, but most of them just sat by their bowls and stared at me, like I was trying to poison them.

I kept at it. I put down the canned food and that was it. If they didn't eat it, too bad. I knew I would win out. Eventually they would eat a bit of it, but not really EAT.

Bob's diabetes is managed with diet. He eats the canned food. He was off shots of insulin in a few weeks. The other cats lost weight, their coats started to shine, they had better energy. Yet...they really weren't eating that much.

....Last October...

The fateful day...finding out Spencer and Gracie had dropped over two pounds, each. Gracie was too thin. Spencer was on the verge. They weren't just holding out to be fed dry food again, they just plain hated their canned food so much they'd rather just starve!

They won the battle of wills. I had to give up and start over.

I got rid of that bad tasting food and began the unpleasant task of buying every canned, grain-free, food I could find. I was determined to find something they liked that was good for them, too. I didn't care what it cost.

And cost it did...

I don't really know how much money I spent, but it was easily a few hundred dollars. With each brand of canned food, I'd remove the label and write notes on it, so I'd know which cats liked, which flavors and if it was so close that possibly, I'd hit the Holy Grail of finding something all seven cats would like.

Right away I found one brand they loved. They ate it right up, but I was fooled because they were SO hungry, even something a bit better was well received, but only for a day or two. I had to keep trying to refine the flavor choices. I did the calculations...because it only comes in small cans, I would have to go through 14 cans a DAY...at almost \$2/can...oh God. I was going to spend a small fortune every month. All this because it's what's best for them.

I decided I had to give in and go back to feeding the cats a SMALL amount of dry (GRAIN FREE!, high quality), food each day. I also added RAW to their canned food. They REALLY like it! I hope that between the RAW and canned, it offsets any problems with feeding the grain-free dry. We'll see how it goes. It certainly helps keep the costs down, but only slightly.

Suddenly, the cats were beginning to show up for their meals, ready to go-all excited and hungry. The first time I heard all of them lapping away at their favorite food, I started to cry. It had taken me over a YEAR to get to the point where each and every cat liked what they were getting fed.

...today...

Spencer stopped attacking the other cats. He and Gracie both gained back one pound! Both are right where they should be with their weight.

The other cats are looking really slim and healthy. They're more playful and vibrant, with the odd exception of Nora, who, no matter what we do, clocks in at 23 pounds! Dr. Larry says to just do the best we can.

It's been a long journey, but I think we're on the right path now.

Yesterday, I came across an old bag of dry cat treats...with all the nasty grains and low quality that make my skin crawl. I was going to put it outside for the racoons, but before I did, I took one treat and offered it to Spencer. Instead of devouring it, he sniffed it, then pawed at the floor, as if to cover up a turd in the litter pan, and walked away.

Well said, Spencer. Well said.

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Comments

Mon, 2008-02-18 20:08 — [chicago gal \(not verified\)](#) [4]

Grain Free Cat Foods [5]

Hi,
I have had my cat on the Hills MD prescription diet food for 8 months and not only is it expensive, he hasn't lost any weight. Now the vet tells me we have to bring him in for 6 month wellness checks because of this food he is on at \$75 bucks a pop. Soooo...I am looking into cheaper, easier to obtain grain free cat food and wondered what you thought of the Innova Evo food? Was it one your cats tried and liked or hated?

Thanks!

Tue, 2008-02-19 08:28 — [Robin Olson](#) [6]

Specific Grain Free Choices [7]

Ugh! I just looked at the ingredient listing for Hills MD for Felines. It's NOT grain-free and the ingredients are really awful! The big no-no is the first, "Chicken By Product Meal."

From About.com: "Chicken by-product meal consists of the ground, rendered, clean parts of the carcass of slaughtered chicken, such as necks, feet, undeveloped eggs and intestines, exclusive of feathers, except in such amounts as might occur unavoidable in good processing practice."

Basically, crap. Where is the nutrition for your cat in this mess of slop?

Next: Corn Gluten Meal. HELLO. CORN IS A GRAIN, last I checked!

This drives me nuts. I even had a fight with a Vet who wanted me to put my DIABETIC cat on a "Prescription" food. He said it was good for them, low in carbs, high in protein, but he wasn't looking at the sources of the ingredients, just the nutrition panel. It was a similar situation ingredient-wise and I chose to NOT follow his guidelines, but do research. Within 4 weeks my cat was OFF insulin and has managed his diabetes with diet only.

Dr. Pierson has a great, informative web site about feline nutrition. She really changed the life of my cats for the better. See the link for her web site in my article, above.

Firstly, remember your cat is a CARNIVORE. After that, read the ingredients on all the food you give your cats. Second, the closer to a RAW diet, the better. If you can give your cat, grain-free CANNED, over dry, that's even better. The less dry, the better.

And to finally answer your question, right now my cats get Indigo Moon, Solid Gold. They only get a SMALL amount every day. Mostly they get a blend of RAW and grain-free canned. The dry is only due to cost factors of feeding 7 cats RAW + Canned. They like this product better than a few of the others.

Lastly, if you do switch over to canned, go slow. Cats may not like it at first, so give them some dry with the canned to help them adjust.

I just started a [Discussion Group](#) ^[8] on feeding guidelines. You might want to check that out, too.

-Covered in Cat Hair

Tue, 2008-04-08 04:33 — [naomi \(not verified\)](#) ^[9]

Cats love meat! ^[10]

When I used to have cats (unfortunately all deceased and can't have cats where we live now) I fed them on a pure minced meat mixture I got from the butcher. I guess it was just various cheap cuts minced together - still sold for human consumption, nothing like the awful recovered meat you get in most canned cat food. I used to mix in a little raw garlic to keep the fleas away and give it to them raw - freezing the portions for easy use.

I think this is the cheapest way to give your cats fresh meat. Mine were super healthy, but supplemented the mince with rabbits, mice and even the odd squirrel!

Sounds like your cats have a really great mum.

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Links

- [1] <http://www.flickr.com/photos/49503020325@N01/423662736>
- [2] <http://www.sniksnak.com/cathealth/liver2.html>
- [3] <http://www.catinfo.org>
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