

Gracie Goes on a Diet

CatChannel humorist Peter Gerstenzang blogs about the challenges of trying to help his cat lose weight.

By Peter Gerstenzang

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Not long ago, I bent down to pick up my cat. I lifted her, but made such a horrible shriek I sounded like a contestant in the clean and jerk competition. Clearly, Gracie was overweight. Also, several of my refrigerator magnets were missing. I prayed there was no connection. Still, I had to get on the case here. No more rewards for Gracie when she performed mundane tasks. Giving her a treat for coming when she was called? That was good. Giving her one for waking up? That was sending the wrong message. In the meantime, I had to put my cat on a diet. Here's how I went about it.

According to an article I read — “When Tabby Is Tubby” — in order to determine weight loss, you must first remember what your cat weighed at 1 year of age. If kitty is 50 percent above this weight, she needs to diet. If she is 25 percent heavier than a 1 year old, she needs to diet, but only half as long. Anything under that and you'll need to take an A.P. course in Boolean algebra. And by the time you finish, your cat will have gained more weight. And you'll have to start your calculations from scratch. So, I picked up Gracie and weighed her. Then I bought some new food — after the feeling returned to my arms.

Apparently, there is diet cat food out there. I bought some dry food that had less than 10 percent fat, but more than 15 percent fiber. Gracie started losing weight. But for a while, the 15 percent fiber had such an effect on her that I had to buy 100 percent more kitty litter. If you get my drift. I fed her the same number of times per day, but smaller portions. Gracie responded mathematically, too. An hour after each meal, she whined 25 percent more than usual. I didn't try to do the calculations on that, or I'd be spending 25 percent more time with my therapist.

A place where cat owners go wrong is not factoring in other stuff kitty eats each day. Like, uh, mice. But this is hard to determine, unless you catch your pet in the act. Now, Gracie sometimes will tell me by signing. Or explain what she's eaten by doing an interpretive dance. But she's gifted. Most folks should just assume their cat eats two mice a week and take it from there. If you want to be sure about this figure, feed your cat the mice yourself.

I also found that playing — often — with Gracie, melted the pounds away. Of course, all this work just made me hungrier. So, you guessed it. Gracie is now a perfect weight. I, however, am a wretched tub of goo. My diet is working, but I'm starving all the time. Hey, there goes a mouse. You'll have to excuse me.