

America's Fittest Pets Winners Announced

A cat from Fort Worth, Texas, is the feline grand prize winner of the contest, sponsored by Hill's.

Posted: Jan. 22, 2009, 3 a.m. EST

Thomas the cat, shown with owner Sharon Decuir, was the big feline winner for his healthy weight loss in America's Fittest Pets Contest. Thomas, an American Shorthair cat owned by Sharon Decuir of Fort Worth, Texas, and Misty, a Golden Retriever owned by Dorene Davis of Holiday, Fla., are the feline and canine grand prize winners of Hill's Pet Nutrition Inc.'s America's Fittest Pets Contest.

The announcement was made Monday at the North American Veterinary Conference in Orlando, Fla., at the Disney Wide World of Sports Complex.

The contest, one part of Hill's participation in the AVMA/Hill's Alliance for Healthier Pets — Obesity Awareness and Prevention Program, encouraged pet owners to work with their veterinary health-care teams to make changes in their pets' lifestyles and feeding habits to help them lose weight. These changes came through regular veterinary weigh-ins, monitored feeding, including the introduction of Hill's Prescription Diet r/d brand pet food, and advocating regular physical activity.

Through the program, Thomas went from more than 17 pounds to 15.8 pounds, and Misty went from 118 pounds to 78 pounds. While Thomas' weight loss of 1.2 pounds might not seem significant at first glance, it's the equivalent of a 130-pound woman losing 10 pounds. Decuir also announced that she lost 30 pounds herself just by being more health-conscious.

Entries were judged on the following criteria: creative writing style in telling the story of the pet's weight-loss experience, expression of the challenges faced and overcome, the resulting percentage of body weight lost and the effect the pet's weight loss has had on the pet owner and family.

The grand prize winners were determined by a panel of judges including personal trainer Gunnar Peterson; I. Craig Prior, veterinary health-care team member at Murphy Road Animal Hospital in Nashville, Tenn.; and Kathy Wright, creative director at Kids and K-9s for Healthy Choices in Ocala, Fla.

Hill's is continuing the message about the pet obesity epidemic into 2009. Updated tactics include providing improved communication and compliance kits to veterinary clinics across the country, and beginning in March, the broadcast of radio and television public service announcements.