**OVERWEIGHT DOGS WALK LESS FREQUENTLY AND TAKE SHORTER WALKS: RESULTS OF A LARGE ONLINE SURVEY OF DOG OWNERS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM**

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**Introduction**

Canine obesity is now the number one health and welfare concern worldwide. Regular physical activity can improve health, and owners are advised to walk their dogs on a regular basis. However, limited information exists about associations between overweight status of dogs and their walking activity.

**Materials and methods**

An online survey was conducted between June and August in 2014, coinciding with the broadcast of a National UK television programme, exploring dog behaviour. Information gathered included signalment, overweight status, and owner reported information on duration and frequency of dog walking. The University of Liverpool Ethics Committee approved the project, and owners consented to data use. Simple and multiple logistic regression analysis were used to determine associations between overweight status and dog walking activity.

**Results**

Data were available from 11500 adult dogs, and 1815 (15.8%) of these were scored as overweigh by their owners. Overweight dogs were more likely to be neutered (*P*<0.001), and middle-aged or older (*P*<0.001). Various breeds were over-represented including (beagle, bull terrier, bulldog, Cavalier King Charles spaniel, Chihuahua, golden retriever, Labrador retriever, and Pug, *P*<0.001 for all). Both frequency and duration of walking were negatively associated with overweight status, with dogs that were walked >1/day (OR=0.70, P<0.0001) or walked for >30min at a time (OR=0.65, P<0.0001) less likely to be overweight. On multiple regression analysis, duration and frequency were independently and negatively associated with the odds of being overweight, along with a range of other factors including age, neuter status, and breed.

**Discussion and conclusions**

This study has identified associations between overweight status and dog walking behaviour. In the future, studies should determine the reason or this association, and whether changes in walking activity can influence on weight status.