

(QUESTION)

Other Munster owners and/or my vet are telling me my dog is fat.

(ANSWER)

Please do not be offended, because I've been through this myself with my dogs.

What I have used and have recommended to many people who have also used it successfully, is the "Green Bean Diet." A dog can lose as much as 5 lbs in a month, which is a huge amount of weight by percentage. She will eat once or twice per day, as you prefer. Whether she eats in the AM or PM (or both) does not matter, except that if you train or hunt in the morning, you should feed her only at night. You do not want to feed her before she is expected to do a lot of running.

To start her on the diet, mix 2 cans of no-salt-added green beans with 1 can of Weight Management dog food (I use Pedigree brand, which they sell at Walmart). If you are feeding twice daily, split these amounts in half for each meal. Ideally, the canned food should have no more than 2 grams of fat per serving. If you can't find Weight Management (or "Lite") canned food, read the Pedigree labels and you'll find one or two varieties having just 3 grams. Most canned dog food has 8-10 grams, so you really need to read the labels carefully before buying. Add some salmon oil to the bean mixture and mix it well.

Put down her food bowl and let her eat until she stops and walks away. Then pick up the bowl and pitch anything that's leftover. Don't worry if she acts hungry later, don't get the food bowl back out and don't try to cajole her into finishing it all. She needs to learn to stop eating when she's full and you need to help her learn. This is a BIG bowl of food and is quite a bit more than she needs to eat in a day, so if she fusses for treats, it's just a bad habit and not that she's truly hungry.

Since she'll be on a soft food diet, you'll need to give her something to clean her teeth every day. I give my dogs one-half (1/2) a large Dentastix and a couple of crunchy biscuits in the morning, because they get their big meal in the evening. Treats have a lot of calories and just a few of some types of treats can equal a whole 2nd/3rd meal a day, so it's no wonder dogs get fat when they are given a lot of treats every day. While on this diet, her total calories from treats should not exceed 500 kcals. Check labels and add it up so you are sure what she is getting.

After a few days of the 2-1 ratio of beans/canned food, you'll find she's leaving quite a bit of food in the bowl. That means it's time to cut back to a 1-1 ratio (1 can beans and 1 can lite dog food). She can stay on this amount/ratio for one week.

After a week, switch her to 1 cup of all-stages or adult dog food containing no more than:

Protein: 26% Fat: 16%

Calories: 425 kcal/cup

mixed with 1 can of green beans per day. Keep her on this mixture for one week. Then switch back to the canned lite food and green bean mixture for a week. Alternate mixtures weekly until she loses all the extra weight, but for no longer than 4 weeks at a time. She should not stay on this diet for longer than 4 consecutive weeks. If she still needs to lose weight after 4 weeks, put her on a reduced-calorie kibble diet for 2 or 3 months, then put her back on the Green Bean Diet. Make sure you do not feed her so much kibble she starts gaining weight again! You should only feed her what she needs to "maintain" her reduced weight until it's safe to put her back on the Diet.

When she's lean and gorgeous, switch her to an adult or all-stages dry dog food. My spayed female dogs weighing 40-50lb get 1.5 cups per day of 26/16 kibble and my intact females weighing 40-50lb get 2 cups per day of 26/16 kibble (when they are getting a moderate amount of exercise and not pregnant/nursing). Additionally, they get approx. 500 kcals of treats/supplements per day.