

Dogs Who Need to Gain Weight But Won't: A Step-By-Step Exploration

Before you begin: Are you sure your dog needs to gain weight? If in doubt, review Greyhound Crossroads' [How To Know If Your Greyhound Is At The Proper Weight](#) or post pictures for greyhound conditioning experts to evaluate. Remember that a retired dog can drop below racing weight without being too thin, and that body type can contribute to a bony appearance.

For most dogs, start with #1 and follow the directions for your answer; the down arrow, ↓, means “go to the next question.” There is one exception to this: For elderly dogs, those with a diagnosed illness, or those recovering from major illness/surgery, start with #9.

Some “Yes” answers lead to an instruction to see the vet. This isn't so the vet can tell you what to feed your dog but so the vet can help you evaluate the dog's health.

- 1. Does the dog show any sign of illness (poor coat, poor stool, lethargy, panting)?**
 - a. Yes → See the vet.
 - b. No ↓
- 2. Does the dog look odd (potbelly, no tuck but has dinosaur spine, hunched) as well as thin?**
 - a. Yes → See the vet.
 - b. No ↓
- 3. Is this a new problem with no good explanation (more exercise, new food, new home)?**
 - a. Yes (new) → See the vet.
 - b. No (old) ↓
- 4. Is the dog actively losing weight (continuing loss)?**
 - a. Yes
 - i. Loss is significant → See the vet.
 - ii. Loss is minimal (no more than 3 lbs. over several months) ↓
 - b. No ↓
- 5. If you feed more, will the dog eat more?**
 - a. Yes, but then he/she gets diarrhea or poops a huge amount.
 - Give extra food in more frequent, smaller meals.
 - Change the food.
 - b. Yes, but it seems like an awfully big quantity ...
 - Feed more of the usual food.
 - c. Don't know.
 - Feed more of the usual food.
 - d. No ↓
- 6. What are you feeding?**
 - a. Kibble (dry commercial food)
 - Try a higher-calorie kibble.
 - Add protein and fat to each meal (gently cooked egg or hamburger, 2-3 per day).
 - b. Mostly meat, mostly chicken or turkey
 - Add or substitute some of a higher-fat meat (beef, pork, duck).
 - c. Mostly higher-fat meat such as beef, pork, or duck
 - Add 1-2 cups cooked carbohydrate (rice, oatmeal, potatoes) per day.
- 7. Did the feeding changes in #5-#6 above help (weigh 1.5-2 weeks after making changes)?**
 - a. Yes → Keep it up!
 - b. No ↓

8. Is the dog young (2-6) and healthy but just skinny?

- a. Yes
 - Some young dogs can eat many calories yet stay thin. If the dog is healthy and not skeletal, relax. Most grow out of this problem by age 5.
- b. No ↓

9. Is the dog elderly (10+), chronically ill, or recovering from major illness/surgery?

- a. Yes
 - Talk with your vet about any diet restrictions the dog needs; vitamin-mineral and high-calorie supplements for picky eaters; and stomach soothing or appetite enhancing meds. Then see #5-#6 above. Many “senior” foods contain less protein than “adult” foods, but elderly or stressed dogs may need more protein. Also, elderly or stressed dogs may benefit from protein that is more bioavailable (eggs, muscle meats). Those who are already fed mostly-meat diets may benefit from some added carbohydrates.
- b. No → Review #5-#6 above. Then consult your vet.