



# How to Weigh Foster Pets

Candie Corriher, DVM, MS



Thank you for joining us to learn how to weigh foster pets...

## Learning Goals

- To explain to foster caregivers how often they should weigh their foster pets
- To teach foster caregivers different methods of weighing foster pets based on size
- To educate foster caregivers on when to contact the foster manager about weight changes in foster pets



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Foster pets need to be weighed at regular intervals. This helps ensure that they are eating appropriately, and are healthy. It tells us whether a skinny pet is putting on weight, or an obese one is losing weight, at a safe rate.

The learning goals of this class are...

To explain to foster caregivers how often they should weigh their foster pets...

To teach foster caregivers different methods of weighing foster pets based on size...

To educate foster caregivers on when to contact the foster manager about weight changes.

## Frequency of Weighing

- Kittens and puppies (0-4 weeks)
  - Daily
- Kittens and puppies (5 weeks- 6 months)
  - At least once weekly
- Cats and dogs (6 months and older)
  - At least once every 2 weeks, unless they have a medical condition that warrants more frequent weight checks



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

How often a foster pet needs to be weighed depends on age and health.

Kittens and puppies between 0-4 weeks of age should be weighed daily...

Kittens and puppies between 5 weeks and 6 months of age should be weighed at least once weekly...

Cats and dogs who are 6 months of age and older should be weighed at least once every two weeks, unless they have a medical condition that warrants more frequent weight checks.

## Scale Types

- Postage or Kitchen Scale
- Baby Scale
- Bathroom Scale
- Walk-on Veterinary Scale



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

There are several different scales you might use to weigh your foster pets: a postage or kitchen scale, a bathroom scale, a baby scale, or a walk-on veterinary scale. We will be explaining how to use each one of these and which works best, depending on your foster pet's size.

## Postage or Kitchen Scale

- Kittens and Puppies (0-4 weeks)
- Steps
  - Turn scale on
  - Select oz or g
  - If using a bowl, place it on the scale
  - Tare (zero) the scale
  - Place your kitten or puppy in the bowl (if using one) or on the scale
  - Record the weight listed on the scale



Photo courtesy of the Humane Society for Southwest Washington, Vancouver, WA



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

For kittens and puppies between 0 and 4 weeks, a weight change of a fraction of an ounce is significant, so a postage scale or a kitchen scale is an excellent choice.

To use this type of scale, first turn it on. Next, select either ounces or grams, whichever measurement your shelter or rescue group prefers that you use.

Bowls are helpful to keep the kitten or puppy from crawling off the scale and to ensure that his or her entire body is on the scale. You do not want a leg or a tail hanging off the edge of the scale; this would cause an inaccurate reading which would be lower than the pet's true weight.

If using a bowl, place it on the scale and then tare the scale; taring the scale brings it back to zero, ensuring that the weight of the bowl is not counted when you are weighing your foster pet. Next, place your kitten or puppy in the bowl, then record the weight listed on the scale.

If you're not using a bowl, follow the same steps, being sure to tare the scale before placing the kitten or puppy on it.

## Postage or Kitchen Scale



Video courtesy of Jenny Wright



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Here is a video that shows how to weigh a kitten on a kitchen scale...  
(Play video)

## Baby Scale

- Kittens, puppies, cats, small dogs
- Steps
  - Turn scale on
  - Select lbs/oz, kg, or g
  - Tare (zero) the scale
  - Place your foster pet on the scale
  - Record the weight listed on the scale



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Baby scales are often used for kittens, puppies, cats, and small dogs. The steps are very similar to weighing on a postage or kitchen scale. Turn the scale on. Select pounds/ounces, kilograms, or grams, whichever measurement that your shelter or rescue group prefers. Tare (zero) the scale. Place your foster pet on the scale, being sure that all body parts, including the tail, are on the scale. Record the weight listed on the scale.

## Baby Scale



Video courtesy of Pet Community Center, Nashville, TN



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Here is a video that shows how to weigh a small dog using a baby scale...  
(Play video)

## Bathroom Scale

- Pets that weigh at least 2 lbs. but are not too large to be held
- Steps
  - Weigh yourself holding your foster pet
  - Weigh just yourself
  - Subtract your weight from both = your foster pet's weight
  - Record the weight



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Pets who weigh at least 2 lbs., but are not too large to be held in your arms, can be weighed with a bathroom scale. Weigh yourself on the bathroom scale while holding your foster pet. Next, weigh just yourself. Finally, subtract your weight from that of both you and your foster pet. This will equal your foster pet's weight. Remember to record the weight.

## Bathroom Scale

**pets**  
at home



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Here is a video that shows how to weigh a dog using a bathroom scale...  
(Play video)

## Walk-on Veterinary Scale

- Can be used for any dog
- Especially useful for large dogs
- Steps
  - Turn the scale on
  - Tare (zero) the scale
  - Position your foster pet on the scale
  - Record the weight



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

A walk-on veterinary scale can be used for any dog, but is especially useful for large dogs. Most animal shelters and rescue groups have these. Your regular veterinarian's office may also be willing to allow you to use theirs.

Using the walk-on scale is similar to the other method's we've discussed... First, turn on the scale and tare it. Next, position your foster pet on the scale. It may take some patience with very wiggly dogs to be sure that all their body parts are on the scale and that they stand still long enough on all four paws for an accurate weight to display.

Take care not to pull up on the dog's leash while weighing, as this can prevent his or her full weight from being distributed across the scale. Once you have a clear reading, record the weight.

## Walk-on Veterinary Scale



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Here is a video that shows how to weigh a large dog using a walk-on veterinary scale...

(Play video)

## Monitoring Weight: Kittens and Puppies

- Small fractions of weight gain or loss are significant in kittens and puppies
  - Kittens: Should gain 4 oz. per week, or ~0.6 oz. per day
  - Puppies: Puppies should be gaining 5-10% of their body weight per day, resulting in doubling their body weight every 10-14 days.



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Monitoring your foster pet's weight over time is very important. Small fractions of weight gain or loss are significant in kittens and puppies, especially those between 0-4 weeks of age. Kittens should be gaining 4 oz. per week, or approximately 0.6 oz. per day. Puppies should be gaining 5-10% of their body weight per day, resulting in doubling their body weight every 10-14 days.

## Monitoring Weight: Cats and Dogs

- **Skinny**
  - Need to gain weight
- **Obese**
  - Need to lose weight
  - Important: Rapid weight loss in cats can lead to hepatic lipidosis
- **Medical Conditions that may affect weight**
- **Follow any feeding and monitoring instructions given by a veterinarian**



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Monitoring your foster pet's weight over time is also essential with cats and dogs who are skinny or obese, or who have medical conditions that may affect their weight.

Skinny foster pets need to gain weight, and obese foster pets need to lose weight.

It is especially important to monitor overweight cats to ensure that they do not lose weight too quickly. Rapid weight loss in cats can lead to hepatic lipidosis, also known as "fatty liver disease." This is a very serious medical problem that can result in the cat needing emergency veterinary intensive care.

There are many medical conditions that affect weight. Geriatric pets may lose weight due to muscle atrophy. Pets with respiratory disease often lose their appetites, which can cause weight loss. Pets with certain types cancer may lose weight as well. Cats with hyperthyroidism will likely be skinny, while dogs with hypothyroidism tend to be obese. Without proper treatment, a hyperthyroid cat will not be able to gain weight and a hypothyroid dog will not be able to lose weight.

Even if your foster pet is of normal weight and seems healthy, be sure to carefully follow any feeding and monitoring instructions given by a veterinarian.

## When to Contact the Foster Manager about Weight Changes

- Depends on:
  - The individual foster pet and any instructions given by a veterinarian
  - Whether the pet is of normal weight, skinny, or obese
  - The pet's age



Barney: on intake, before foster



Barney: after foster

Both photos courtesy of the Humane Society for Southwest Washington, Vancouver, WA



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

When to contact the foster manager about weight changes depends on:  
The individual foster pet and any instructions given by a veterinarian...  
Whether the pet is of normal weight, skinny or obese...and...  
The pet's age.

For example, we want a very skinny stray kitten like Barney to put on weight while in foster, as shown in these before and after photos. This is one reason why foster homes are so important- pets like Barney have the chance to get into better shape so that they can be adopted!

So, in Barney's case, if there had not been any weight gain in the foster home, that would have been an indication to contact the foster manager. If your foster kittens or puppies under 6 months of age are not gaining weight or are losing weight, it is very important to contact your foster manager to arrange for immediate or emergency veterinary care. This is especially true if your foster pets are between 0 and 4 weeks.

## Conclusion

- It is helpful for foster caregivers to understand how often to weigh their foster pets and which type of scale to use
- Detecting weight changes early allows for any underlying health issues or diet deficiencies to be addressed quickly
- Always contact the foster manager if you are concerned or have questions



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

It is helpful for foster caregivers to understand how often to weigh their foster pets and which type of scale to use.

Detecting weight changes early allows for any underlying health issues or diet deficiencies to be addressed quickly, before the problem worsens.

Always contact the foster manager if you are concerned about or have questions regarding your foster pet's weight.



## Test Your Knowledge!

Quiz - 6 questions

Last Modified: Jun 13, 2018 at 02:19 PM

### PROPERTIES

On passing, 'Finish' button: [Goes to Next Slide](#)

On failing, 'Finish' button: [Goes to Next Slide](#)

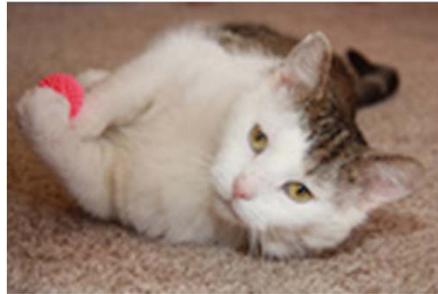
Allow user to leave quiz: [After user has completed quiz](#)

User may view slides after quiz: [At any time](#)

Show in menu as: [Multiple items](#)



**Thank you for fostering!!!**  
And special thanks to Dr. Susan Krebsbach  
and Dr. Mike Greenberg for their reviews



Maddie's  
Fund

How to Weigh Foster Pets

Thank you for watching and thank you for fostering!! You are making a huge difference in the lives of foster pets! We wish you and your foster pets all the best!