

## Appendix 1

### Client Assessment of Canine Body Condition

*Researcher conducts interview after having obtained signed consent form and leading client and dog into consultation room.*

### Researcher's Interview Questions

Thank you for taking part in this study. As you'll have gathered from the information sheet, we're carrying out research to determine whether the current body condition score (BCS) chart system is an easy and accurate method for dog owners to use. To help us do this, **would you mind answering the following questions about your dog?**

Breed: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: Male/Female

*Researcher carries out BCS on client's dog and records score.*

- 1. Now, please describe your dog. Which of these do you feel applies best?**

*Researcher reads out options.*

- a) Ideal weight
- b) Overweight
- c) Markedly obese
- d) Thin
- e) Very thin

*Researcher then shows client the BCS chart.*

- 2. Now, using this chart, please assign a score to your dog:**

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**3. Did you find the chart made it easier to determine your dog's body condition than just looking, as you did a moment ago?**

Yes      No

**4. Which aspects of the chart did you find helpful and why?**

*Researcher reads out options and transcribes client's explanation in textbox.*

- i. Phrase assigned to each score
- ii. Image
- iii. Weight percentages
- iv. Characteristics listed for each score

**5. Which aspects of the chart do you feel can be improved and why?**

*Researcher reads out options and transcribes client's explanation in textbox.*

- i. Phrase assigned to each score
- ii. Image
- iii. Weight percentages
- iv. Characteristics listed for each score

**6. Have you been taught previously how to use a body condition score chart by your vet?**

Yes      No

**7. Are you aware of the health problems associated with pet obesity?**

Yes

No

**8. Once again, thank you for taking part in this study. Do you have any further questions you'd like to ask?**

*Researcher takes opportunity to discuss study and its implications further, should the client wish it. She also offers a mini BCS chart to take away for at-home monitoring, should the client want one.*

## Appendix 2

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### *CLIENT ASSESSMENT OF CANINE BODY CONDITION*

*You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask us if you would like more information, or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and veterinarian if you wish. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to. Thank you for reading this.*

#### **Background**

Management of body weight in companion animals is important for maintaining their metabolic and overall health. Overweight and obese dogs, as well as other pets, are being seen increasingly in the clinic. The correct diagnosis of this condition is important for determining the appropriate treatment for any health issues which may arise as a result, such as heart disease. The method used most commonly by vets at the moment is body condition scoring, using the body condition score (BCS) chart. However, an important aspect of successful weight management in dogs is careful monitoring by their owners at home. In order to prevent weight gain and obesity in normal-weight dogs, or to prevent weight regain in previously overweight dogs that have been on a weight loss regime, owners must be helped to correctly assess their dog's body weight.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The study aims to compare owners' assessments of their dog's body condition with and without the use of the BCS chart to the assessment of the investigator.

#### **Why have I been chosen to take part?**

You are being invited to take part because you are a dog owner who is over the age of 18. Several more owners such as yourself (in the region of 100) will also be invited from this clinic and at least one other UK clinic.

#### **What is the BCS chart?**

There are a number of charts currently available that may be used to assist an owner or veterinary professional with the assessment of canine body condition. Dependant on the type of chart the 'assessor' may have the choice of 5 or 9 different scores to determine body condition. Each score is combined with a picture and written description to allow easy interpretation and assessment of canine body condition. These scores cover all body types, ranging from very thin to obese, as well as the healthier states in between. The score which best describes the dog is assigned to him or her. If a score at either end of the scale is assigned,

the vet can then decide what diet and exercise regime would best help the dog return to a healthy weight.

**What is involved in the study?**

If you agree to take part, you will be asked a series of questions about your dog by the study investigator in a short interview (taking about 10 minutes). You will be given a chance to assess your dog using a BCS chart and asked for your opinion on how well you think it works. The investigator, who has been professionally trained, will also score your dog using the same chart. Your answers and scores will be recorded by her.

**Are there any risks to my dog? Do I have to take part?**

There are no risks involved. The popularity of the BCS method is due to the fact that it is easy to use, can be performed while the dog is awake and is pain-free, involving only gentle palpations. You will be present with your dog during the entire interview and assessment period. In the unlikely event that your dog becomes upset by the scoring procedure, the research will be abandoned immediately, and you may withdraw from the study, incurring absolutely no disadvantage to your relationship with your vet or your dog's treatment in the clinic.

**What are the benefits to me and my dog if we participate?**

You will be offered a conveniently sized mini-BCS chart to take home (only if you wish). This will enable you to keep track of your dog's body weight; by ensuring correct management of your pet's body weight you can be sure that they maintain a high quality of life and do not suffer health problems as a result of increased body weight.

**Are there any wider benefits?**

The BCS is an ideal way to directly involve an owner in overseeing his/her own dog's progress in returning to, and maintaining, a healthy body weight, should this be necessary. Widespread use of the chart in the home will help owners accurately monitor their dogs' body conditions and provide accurate information to the vet, helping him/her, in turn, recommend treatments better tailored to the dog.

**What happens to the data collected on my dog?**

The information you give will be anonymous and later analysed by computer using statistical software. The findings may then be published in veterinary and scientific journals to help vets and owners worldwide to benefit from them. The anonymous data will be kept for six years and then destroyed. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to it before then, and only on University computers which are password-protected.

**What happens next?**

If you would like to take part, please read and sign the attached consent form. The investigator will then accompany you and your dog into a quiet consultation room to begin the interview. If you have any questions or concerns now or at any time during the interview, please don't hesitate to ask. If you would rather not take part, simply let the investigator know. If you would like time to think about whether or

not to participate, please feel free to take this information away with you, perhaps to return to the clinic to participate on another day.

**Who can I contact for further information?**

If you require any further information, please feel free to contact either of us: **Rebekah Eastland-Jones** (Student Investigator; tel: 07795-XXXXXX; hleatl@liv.ac.uk) or **Dr Lucy Pickavance** (Project Supervisor; tel: 0151-XXX-XXXX; lucyp@liverpool.ac.uk).

*Thank you very much for your time and consideration.*

**In the event that you agree to participate but find that there are any problems, please contact us via the contact details above, and we will try to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint, which you feel you cannot discuss with us, then please contact the University's Research Governance Officer on 0151 794 8290 (ethics@liverpool.ac.uk). When contacting the Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.**

## Appendix 3

### CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** *Client assessment of canine body condition*

**Researchers:** Miss Rebekah Eastland-Jones, Dr Lucy Pickavance and Dr Alexander German

**Please  
initial  
box**

1. I confirm that I am over the age of 18.
  
2. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 11/03/2013 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
  
3. I confirm that my dog has not become unduly distressed, behaved aggressively, unpredictably or dangerously on previous visits to the veterinarian, and that I will ask that the interview is terminated if at any time I consider my dog is becoming distressed.
  
4. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights or the care of my dog being affected.
  
5. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide, and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
  
6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant Name	Date	Signature

REBEKAH EASTLAND-JONES

Student Investigator (and person taking consent)	Date	Signature
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#### **Contact Details**

**Student Investigator: Miss Rebekah Eastland-Jones**  
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