



**GRAND AVENUE**  
VETERINARY CLINIC

## FREE-CHOICE VS. CONTROLLED FEEDING

During today's examination, we noted that your cat was overweight. As a result, we recommended that your cat(s) be on a controlled feeding schedule. This handout will hopefully help explain this important change in your cat's lifestyle.

### **What does a controlled feeding schedule mean?**

A controlled feeding schedule is one in which cats are fed once, or more often, twice a day on a regular, set schedule. This contrasts to free-choice feeding in which the food is out all the time for the cat.

### **What type of food can I feed my cat and how much can I feed it?**

A cat can either be feed dry food or moist food on a controlled-feeding schedule. Recognize however that moist food has fewer calories in it than dry food does on an ounce for ounce basis. For this reason, we often times recommend cats getting at least

some moist food in their diet as it is a way to decrease the overall amount of calories while still feeding the cat the same "amount" of food.

The amount of food you feed the cat will depend on the specific type/brand of food it is on. As a general guide though, we like to feed cats around  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup or less of dry food a day and about 1  $\frac{1}{3}$  cans or less of moist food a day.

### **How do I switch from a free-feeding schedule to a controlled feeding schedule?**

Cats have a very sensitive metabolism so undertaking such a process must be done on a slow basis over the course of several (3-4 months). **CATS CANNOT GO ON A CRASH COURSE DI-**

**ET...they can become very ill if you try this!!!**

We recommend the following steps:

**Weeks 1-2:** Pick up the food before you go to bed and put it back down when you get up in the morning. This immediately cuts out 6-8 hours a day that a cat can eat.

**Weeks 3-4:** Pick up the food when you get home from work and put it back down 2 hours later.

**Weeks 5-6:** Pick up the food from 9-noon on weekends.

**Weeks 7-8:** Pick up the food during another chunk of time during the week, about 1-2 hours in length.

**Weeks 9-10:** Same as last two weeks, and so on and so on.

We have you continue to do this until the cat has a defined window of opportunity to eat... which should be about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 hour in the am and  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 hour in the

pm. This all together should take about 3-4 months to accomplish.

We do this slowly for two reasons, one was stated above, that cats can get sick if they go on a crash course diet, and secondly because



it allows cats the opportunity to learn and start to become accustomed to the fact that their food will not be out all day long.

