**Dog obesity research – video transcript 7/8/12**

**Narrator:**

They are man’s best friend and they love us unconditionally, which is just as well because over 40% of Australian dogs are not just fat, but obese meaning we are killing our beloved pets with over indulgence. A group of La Trobe animal science students think the key to addressing this serious canine health issue is at the tip of a shovel and is lying in a heap of dog poo. Students Matt Flavel, Bianka Csizmas and Ilana Ferwerda will attempt to establish a link between the bacteria present in the digestive system of dogs and its presence in canine obesity. Their research will involve the analysis of bacterial genetics gathered from dog stools.

**Matt Flavel:**

What we’re really talking about is a pre-disposition to obesity and so hopefully what we find from this will reduce that pre-disposition and make it easier for dogs to stop being obese.

**Narrator:**

The group is aiming to test 300 dogs from across Melbourne, they expect to see a significant difference in the kind of bacteria present in obese dogs compared to the healthy ones.

**Matt Flavel:**

In the human studies they have found that there are some key differences in the composition of the communities in the fat subjects compared to the healthy weight subjects. So what we’re really hoping for is to find those same characteristics in the dogs.

**Narrator:**

Once the fattest dog in Australia, and now the pin up for canine transformation Samson met the concerned students at his home in Yarra Glenn. Samson weighed 84.6kg when he was rescued 12 months ago by vet Amber Lavery. Amber says that without a strict diet any dog can become obese.

**Amber Lavery – Veterinarian**

I think over a long period of time he’d been fed the wrong type of food and just way too much food, so too much dog food as well as human food such as pizza, pasta, meat, just too much of the wrong type of food.

**Narrator:**

Poor Samson struggled to walk more than a few hundred meters and Amber says that despite always being a friendly dog he is much happier now that he has shed the extra kilo’s.

**Amber Lavery - Veterinarian:**

He is a lot more active, he initiates more play with the other dogs, he runs around, he’s really keen to go on walks. He sees the lead come out and he gets really excited and he is able to walk a good five kilometres quite happily now.

**Narrator:**

She says it was tough love and a strict doggy diet that saved Samson’s life.

**Amber Lavery - Vererinarian:**

So obesity can have a really negative impact on the health of dogs, it affects their mobility and their joint health as well as their heart and can lead to problems such as diabetes and pancreatitis.

**Narrator:**

Concerned dog owners should contact their vet for diet advice before embarking on their very own version of the biggest doggy loser.

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