

# FAQ ON GROWTH CHARTS FOR THE VETERINARY TEAM

## WHAT ARE THE GROWTH CHARTS?

### What is the purpose of the kitten and puppy growth charts?



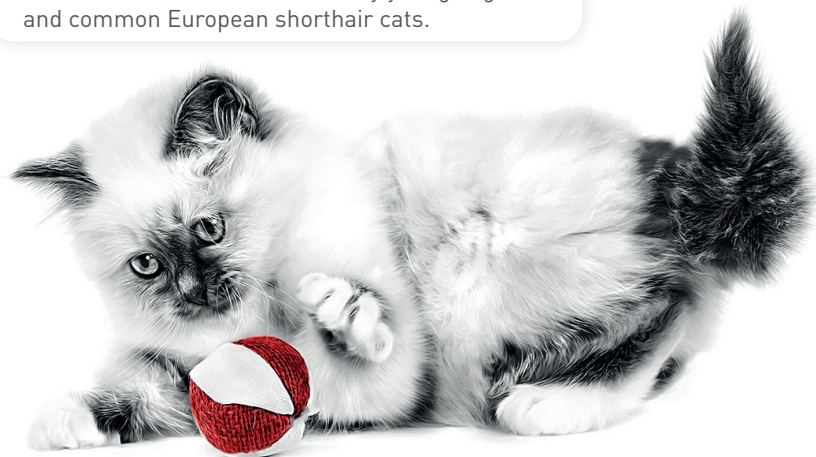
Just like the ones used by health professionals to assess the development of children (such as the World Health Organisation's Child Growth Standards), **the puppy and kitten growth charts are easy-to-use clinical tools designed to help the veterinary team monitor, record and track the growth and development of kittens and puppies.**

They provide valuable insights into the health and well-being of puppies and kittens during their early life stages.

### How have they been developed?

They have been created in partnership with the **Waltham Petcare Science Institute** and a **group of experts including veterinarians, statisticians, and nutrition scientists.**

They are based on a statistical model derived from measurements from healthy young dogs and common European shorthair cats.






### What are the objectives behind this tool?



The main objective is to help support **healthy growth**. We know that **healthy growth** is key as it will contribute to **long term health and wellbeing**. An essential part of supporting growth is to ensure that puppies and kittens are gaining a healthy amount of weight. The growth charts help you to monitor the growth rhythm of puppies and kittens. The growth charts help you identify early any puppies and kittens with an abnormal growth pattern (those that are not gaining enough weight or those at risk of overweight or obesity) and allows you to intervene much earlier.

### What are the benefits of using those growth charts?

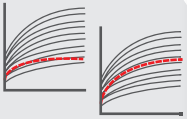
The growth charts are all about checking if the pet's development is in line with expectations and assessing the risk of failing to thrive or overweight and obesity. **But there are benefits for all the stakeholders:**

-  **Kitten/puppy:** to precisely monitor their growth and development.
-  **Pet owners:** to have a simple tool that they can rely on to feel confident when it comes to their kitten or puppy's healthy growth.
-  **Vet professionals:** to strengthen the relationship with the pet owner at the early stage of the life journey, by positioning themselves as both an expert and partner for the pet owner.

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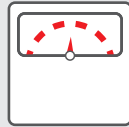
## HOW DO YOU USE THE GROWTH CHARTS FOR KITTENS & PUPPIES?

### Which growth chart should I start with?



We have different charts depending on species (kitten or puppy), gender (female or male) and predicted adult size (for dogs only), as growth patterns and milestones can vary. You should take all these factors into consideration when selecting a chart. **Please refer to the section “Specific cases” for particular situations.**

### How should I use the growth chart?



You need to plot the age and weight of the puppy or kitten on the chart. Recording weight can start at any age, even if growth lines start at 12 weeks.

**It is recommended to have at least 2 different weight measurements to confirm the percentiles in which the pet is growing.**

### How often should the weighing and follow-up occur?



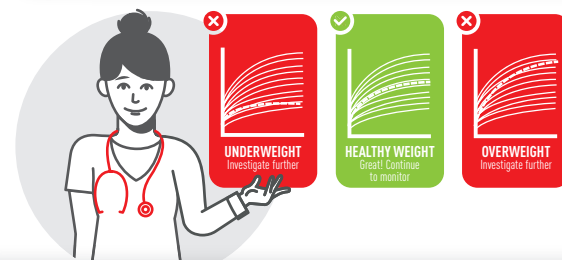
**It's recommended to record growth at regular intervals.** The minimum recommended is to weigh the puppy or kitten every two to four weeks up to the age of six months (or up to three months after neutering), and then every three months after this. The pet owner can manage those measurements at home, plotting the weight on the charts themselves.

### How to interpret and understand the percentile lines?

Inconsistent or abnormal growth patterns may signal health concerns, and early detection is crucial for timely intervention. **This can be managed thanks to the growth charts and their percentile lines.**

The percentile lines depict normal growth trajectories. There are nine in total, representing the 0.4<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup>, 91<sup>th</sup>, 98<sup>th</sup> and 99.6<sup>th</sup> percentile. **The number refers to the percentage of the population that weighs less than the corresponding figure.** For example, if a puppy is tracking the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, this means that 75% of puppies in this segment of the population will weigh less (and 25% will weigh more). **In other words, the lines indicate the estimated percentage of animals of the same size that show a similar pattern of growth.**

**A normal growth is when the pattern remains within the same two percentiles.** If the pet's weight measurements cross more than two percentiles or the growth line flattens, it is an indicator that something is amiss and that you should carry out an evaluation of the animal's health, diet, and feeding practices, in order to determine the cause and take appropriate action.



Growth chart examples (normal and abnormal)

### How can neutering affect the growth chart use and interpretation?

**Neutering can lead to a reduction in energy requirements.** If no precautions are taken, the pet may gain weight too quickly, eventually crossing two or more percentiles. We recommend **marking the operation on the growth chart with a different-coloured pen and noting the date in the accompanying table.** Then the weight should be recorded once a month for three months following the procedure.

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**Should the pet owners continue to weigh the kitten or puppy if he/she is not doing well?**



Yes, they can continue to weigh them. But it is advisable to take **further measurements once they have fully recovered** (e.g., at least once a month for three months).

**What information should I share with pet owners for them to carry out the plotting and follow-up?**

You need to make sure they understand how to weigh their pet, the frequency at which they should do it and how to plot the weight on the chart. To support them and answer their potential questions, **you can share with them our Growth Chart Booklet**, which is a dedicated tool for pet owners.

You can also refer to our **How should I use the growth charts with my client?** to help you ensure you explain all the necessary information to them.



## SPECIFIC CASES

**How to select the right chart if you don't know the dog breed or if they are a mixed breed?**



**You need to select the most relevant growth chart in terms of estimated adult weight.** Start plotting, and if at any point you notice that the selected chart was not the correct one, then you should change and replot all the previous weight's on the new chart.

**What if we don't know the accurate age of the kitten/puppy?**

**Try to estimate it;** for instance having a rough idea by paying attention to when their adult teeth come through. However, extra care should be taken in these cases.

**How to manage in the case of a giant dog or cat above 7kg?**

Researchers have found important differences in growth patterns for giant dogs or cats weighing over 7kg at the adult stage, making it challenging to devise a single chart for these breeds or size category. Nevertheless, there are proposals to develop growth charts for the more common giant breeds in the future.