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Jan 2020



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Front Cover By: Brian Harrison

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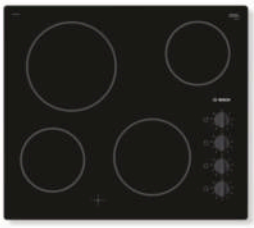

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Dear Consett Magazine readers,

Welcome to 2020

Can you believe it's a new decade?

20 years ago this millennium began and almost 40 years ago on September 12, 1980, the Consett Steelworks closed for the last time. Despite many protests, the Steelworks in Consett closed under a Margaret Thatcher lead Conservative government with the loss of 4,500 jobs in our town.

Fast forward to 2020 and many people who were around in Consett in the 1980s may not recognise the political landscape and thoughts of its people in the area. For many years the North West Durham area gave large majorities suggesting a safe seat for the Labour Party. In one of the general election's biggest shocks, Richard Holden beat Labour's Laura Pidcock to become North West Durham's representative. Consett today is now represented in the House of Commons of the UK Parliament by Richard Holden of the Conservative and Unionist Party. North West Durham has never been represented by a Conservative MP. Holden won the North West Durham constituency with 1,144 votes more than Labour.

Shockingly, it seems the Brexit referendum's outcome, scepticism of Labour's Jeremy Corbyn and the British Governments overall inability to 'Get Brexit Done' has caused a shift in the mindset of the Consett's populace from Labour to Tory.

With such a divided opinion on the UK's role in Europe and other important issues, can we the good people of Consett come together and make 2020 a great year for our rapidly growing, vibrant and beautiful town; despite our divided mindsets on political issues? The Consett Magazine team sure hopes so.

If you have any concerns you'd like your new local MP to discuss in Parliament, you can use the following contact information to get in touch with him:

Mr. Richard Holden, House of Commons. London SW1A 0AA

Phone: 0207 219 3000
Email: richard.holden.mp@parliament.uk
Facebook: /Richard4NWDurham/

We're always eager to hear from local people and businesses on topics that matter to you and the wider local community. If you've got an idea for a story you'd like to share with the people of Consett, please drop us an email on editor@consettmagazine.com or text us on 07497966171 - and remember we have almost 2,000 articles available online at consettmagazine.com!

Here at Consett Magazine, we've decided to give the print edition a bit of an overhaul with brand new page layouts and design changes. Please let us know what do you think?

All the best to everyone in 2020,

Barry Kirkham, Marco Elsy, and everyone who makes the Consett Magazine possible.

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Contributors

Brian Harrison
Barry Kirkham
Marco Elsy
Neil Sullivan
Lorraine Weightman
Christina Groves
Alex Nelson
Neal Crossan
Joan Willis

CONSETT MAGAZINE

SCAN ME

The Front Cover

The front cover this month is a painting by Brain Harrison - send any drawings or photographs to: editor@consettmagazine.com

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Consett History - By Brian Harrison

Wailing Ghosts and things that go bump in the night

I have been researching family history for some time and do a lot of research via the local newspapers. It is a treasure trove of information as well as interesting and unusual stories. The following are a few ghostly tales reported in the local papers from mining villages around the area.

Back in 1892 in the mining town of Birtley, the villagers had become very excited after strange noises began to emanate from the house of a Mr Wild, a miner at the nearby Birtley Colliery. The house was possibly 27 1st Brick Row, which was the abode of a Thomas Wild, a miner and his family on the 1891 Census. The investigation into the noises included structural checking of both the walls and the roof which revealed nothing. Nightly vigils took place and although "far away tremulous wailing sounds" and distant crying could be heard spasmodically, no movement or apparition ever appeared.

The local Spiritualists asked to visit the house so that they could interview the "shade" but Mr Wild declined their offer. During the haunting crowds would gather outside to hear the wailing and speculate. Many stories bandied about some more fantastical than others. As for Thomas Wild and family by 1901 they had moved on and were living only a short distance away in Pelton Fell. I haven't been able to find any further information on the events or if the disturbances continued.

Jumping forward another 10 years, in the early spring of 1902 George Lamb moved into one of the newly renovated cottages in Chapel Row, Shotton. The cottage having been abandoned for some 20-30 years. The town had sprung back to life after the re-opening of the Colliery back in 1900. At first George was over the moon with his new home but it wasn't long before strange occurrences started to happen. About a month after moving in George and his family began to be woken by loud rattling and banging at the front door. Night after night around twelve o'clock the noises persisted. He alerted his neighbours and friends to what was happening and people began to look out for the culprit believing it to be a practical joker. However, no one was ever seen and no foot steps running or walking away were ever heard. The disturbances continued throughout the spring and right into autumn. George and his family were now feeling the affects of this continuous nuisance.

As winter came so did the snow and finally a chance to catch the joker red handed. As the snow fell and filled the street the rattling came again. This was the chance George had been waiting for, he ran to the door ready



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to follow the culprits footsteps and finally put an end to this whole drama. He swung open the door and to his horror no footprints were to be seen.

The only person to ever see anything was George's son, a young miner who also worked at the colliery. Coming home late one night around 11 o'clock he was said to have spotted a "grey shadow slipping around the side". He gave chase but the shadow just toyed with him. At one point it turned toward him with "burning eyes, like living coal, glaring at him" stopping the horrified lad in his tracks, before disappearing into the night. The terrified lad ran home to retell the whole event.

The tale of the Durham Ghost at Shotton became widespread news even reaching the London newspapers and further afield. The secretary of the Experimental Committee of the Psychical Research Society, Mr E. Weslake put the entire episode down to rumbling pit workings shaking the door and hi jinx of the local people. The apparition seen by the son he put down to pure juvenile hallucinations. The statements were not well received by George, his family and friends. George was stated as saying that the ghost had turned his life into "a living hell".

The cottages of Chapel Row, like the colliery itself, are now long gone. However, no reasonable explanation either on material or supernatural grounds were ever found for the events which took place.

Back to somewhere closer to home and also more up to date. Back in 1968 reports of a haunting of Wheldon House, Ebchester, the home then of Mrs Lucie McDermott was spread across the papers. Lucie, then aged 72, had not been in the village that long having took up residence in the 10 bedroomed house only 6 years earlier. The house was also where she and her brother had ran their general dealers business from.

The haunting started quite quickly after she moved in with noises which could not be explained even after lots of investigation. The noises continued at regular intervals but Lucie paid them no notice and got on with her daily life. However, things were to take a twist. Her brother unfortunately died prompting Lucie to sort out some lumber on the upper floor of the centuries old house. While clearing away some wood she came across a secret passage leading to a previously unknown small box room. Very shortly after that she also discovered a box of bones tucked away in the attic. They were still in situ when the story was recounted by Lucie to the papers.

The house itself was said to have been a hiding place for monks during the time of reformation, although it is was registered back in 1975 as a Grade II listed building and predominately of 18th Century construction. The house back then would have been set in a perfect position to view any movement from either Newcastle or indeed Shotley Bridge, spy holes still evident in the attic. To further add to the story at the rear of the property in the orchard at the bottom of the garden lies the graves of 7 monks. It was these monks, said Lucie, who were the source of the haunting.

In the two years prior to the newspaper articles the Ghosts had become more and more active, but to Lucie it had just become part of her life and the charm of her home.

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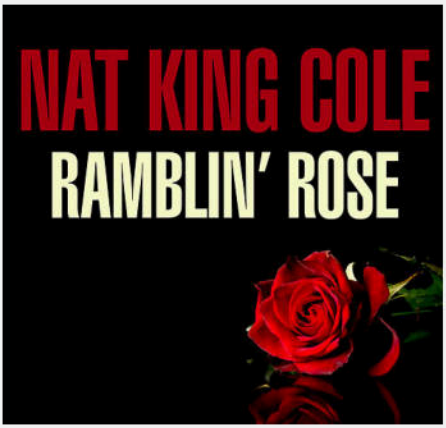
Alternatively, read more and fill out a simple online application to find out if you qualify here: **nbsl.org.uk**

* (A similar fund is available for some neighbouring areas.)

Ramblin' Rose - By Lorraine Weightman

Ramblin' Rose



'There is no such thing as darkness; only a failure to see.'

At the beginning of a new year most of us will make some kind of resolution, whether it to be healthier, thinner, happier, or all three. The festive season is followed by a leaner more reflective time when the glitter and tinsel are safely packed away for another year and sales slash the gifts we saved up to buy a month before. Everything feels a bit flat as the days are still short and Spring seems a long way off.

So how we approach this time will help us progress through the cold months with a positive attitude. If we tell ourselves that almost everything is the same, just the earth is just a bit darker than normal, then we can more than muddle through.

My Auntie Rose celebrated her birthday on January 19th sharing it with Edgar Alan Poe and it was apparently the feast day of King Canute - she was full of information!

Being one of the most positive people I've ever met, she also delighted in eccentricity. I'm forever thankful that she helped to shape my early years growing up in Consett.

In the darkest days of January - as every other month of the year - she cooked and looked after everyone else, always putting their needs before her own.

And on the nearest Saturday to her birthday she religiously made a party tea to rejoice in being alive.

I remember one time in 1963 when the snow was packed solid and we had to shovel our way out of our front door in Alexandra Street, we happily cleared the path in anticipation of tucking into home made apple pie and Carnation milk later on in the day.



I recall watching her carefully preparing the Birthday food in the kitchen next to a roaring coal fire - set and lit by my Uncle Pat - while listening to Radio Four.

She always listened to Radio Four on her red Roberts's radio which sat close to her, and seemed to be constantly dusted with flour as she worked alongside it.

My Uncle Pat and Michael usually spent Saturdays sitting in the living room, watching sport on a television perched on spindly legs made to look like part of the furniture. Their shift off from the steelworks meant they could indulge themselves by following the horse racing and putting a quick bet on in the little shop next to The Demi.

Meanwhile I was quite happy listening to her stories as she let me sprinkle sugar over the milk brushed pie before she popped it in the ancient oven.

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Her party teas always consisted of ham and pease pudding sandwiches, sliced malt loaf laden with thick butter, savoury duck and polony which my Dad and Uncles liked - but I could never work out what they were made of - and battenburg cake which was my least favourite. But the signature apple pie was worth waiting for. And there was always the last of the mince pies to use up as they were selling them off in Value Stores.

She had painstakingly starched a white linen cloth and I helped her lay the table. Out of the sideboard she retrieved the pink teapot with gold edging and the little milk jug with a matching pattern while setting out the china cups, saucers and the plates. She made the ordinary feel magical and quoted from Alice in Wonderland as we worked. 'Twinkle twinkle little bat how I wonder what you're at, Up above the world's you fly, like a tea tray in the sky'. This always makes me smile!

The family had bought her Nat King Cole's album for her birthday and she was thrilled we both got a mention on the back cover, as he had recorded 'Ramblin' Rose' and 'Sweet Lorraine'.

As well as being there for everyone, she educated herself by constantly reading and keeping up with current affairs. There were always copies of 'The Guardian' and the 'New Statesman' lying close to her. And her favourite person to quote was Malcolm Muggeridge.

Always there to encourage one's individuality one of her favourites of his was:

'Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream.'

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Places to Go – FRANKFURT in Germany

On 26/7 November, I took what was expected to be a post-Brexit trip to Germany on a rare excursion abroad for this column. By the date of travel, we were still in the EU. Our party gathered at the Eurostar terminal at St. Pancras in London (next to King's Cross) and used the Deutsche Bahn ICE service from Brussels via Cologne to Frankfurt. Leaving London at 0857, we arrived at Frankfurt at 1516.

Frankfurt is the fifth largest city in Germany, with only 750,000 inhabitants, but is the major financial centre of the country. It has a twin city arrangement with Birmingham. Frankfurt has its own large Christmas Market in the old town, and the new old town which is an extension using buildings which look like they are ancient, but have been built recently using traditional skills.

It grew as a result of medieval trade fairs, and the first currency exchange for traders was established in 1585 with uniform exchange rates for the various types of money traded at the fairs. A city state for years, its St. Paul's church was used for the first parliament of the new German state in 1848, and it is home to thirty museums in a burgeoning cultural quarter.

Now, 90% of trades on the stock exchanges are done in the city. 14 of the 15 skyscrapers in the country are in Frankfurt, which is the HQ of many banks and the European Central Bank.

On an evening guided tour around the city, we saw the large illuminated blue Euro sign, studded with twelve gold stars to represent the founding members of the EU. We were not one of the first 12 countries, so they won't have to take one off if/when we leave!

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We had a meal inside one of the restaurants in the Christmas Market area, including the apple wine which seems more popular than beer.

We returned to our hotel, the new Hyatt Place, on the S Bahn (suburban railway) and a shuttle bus from the airport station, where we had first arrived. Great excitement there, for on December 15



there is a new S-Bahn station opening adjacent to the hotel called Gateway Gardens which will make that business park one of the best connected in the country, and therefore in Europe.

The new station will be the first in Germany to bear an English name. Incidentally, that date is also the day for timetable changes in Britain, on the second Sunday in December.

On the second day I wanted to see a bit more of the city, using the mix of underground trains, the U-Bahn, with nine lines, the S-Bahn, nine suburban lines, and the Strassenbahn or street trams with ten lines. The local buses were on strike. The picture shows a tram approaching the station at the Messe, where trade fairs are now held, showing the green carpet that many of the tram lines run on.

Underground trains run in tunnels in the centre, but in the suburbs they run on reserved trackways or on the street. The city is justly proud of its public transport system which has been heavily invested in over the years. Owing to the cancellation of a high speed ICE train on the way back we sampled the rival Thalys service from Cologne to Brussels and passed over the UK Border in Brussels Midi station before boarding the new Eurostar train via the Channel Tunnel on the way home.

Alex Nelson stayed at the Hyatt Place hotel in Frankfurt and travelled courtesy of Deutsche Bahn.
www.nationalrail.com / www.frankfurt-tourismus.de (select English language)

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Memories of WW1



As told to us by my mother Kitty and my mother-in-law Sylvia, sadly now both deceased.

My mother who was born in Newcastle in 1914 remembers visiting her father in what must have been the Richard Murray Hospital in Blackhill (the site is now a housing estate) after he was wounded whilst serving with the Tyneside Irish regiment in France or Belgium in WW1.

My grandmother as I remember her was a fierce little woman (4 feet 11 inches in height) and round as an apple.

She could neither read nor write having had to care for her siblings and cousins from an early age.

Some of them were eventually cared for by the Catholic Rescue Society which was based in Newcastle. Which coincidentally became my husband's place of work as a social worker in the 1970's. That organization is now known as St. Cuthbert's Care.

My grandmother Mary Ellen had 14 live births including 2 sets of twins and 1 set of triplets all of whom died whilst only months old. This left her with 7 surviving children.

My mother remembered walking from the hospital with her parents into Shotley Bridge to catch a bus into Newcastle. Her father who was obviously now more ambulance, bought her a brightly coloured ball at the post office which she said was called ' Crinnions'.

Perhaps Brian Harrison may be able to confirm the owners name. My mother came to live in the area when she married my father Thomas who worked at Consett Iron Company.

My mother-in-law tells of her mother Adeline, who was the go-to person in The Grove before the advent of the NHS, in times of birth, illness or death.

During WW1, Adeline volunteered to read to wounded soldiers presumably at the Richard Murray Hospital.

Whilst during this contact with the wounded soldiers, she met her husband to be Tommy whom she later married. We think that he may have been a stretcher bearer.

He became my husband's grandfather who recalls that Tommy used to dangle his trouser braces behind him and pretend he was a horse with my husband hanging on to the pretend reins.

A little bit more macabre, Tommy, a gentle giant of a man had two shrapnel wounds in his back which had been very roughly sewn up by no doubt extremely busy doctors at the front.

My husband recalls putting his finger into the holes!!

I wonder if my husband's grandmother ever read to my grandfather.

How strange that life's threads and events can maybe unknowingly join places and people together.

Consett Pool

Some devastating news in the Consett Pool League as the Barn A have folded as a team meaning all points against that team are now void.

This still leaves Blackhill Club top by 4 points over Finnians B. The Phoenix and Finnians A will still be challenging near the end who have 1 and 2 games in hand respectively. Over to Division 2 and the Station Club are in fine form, with 2 11-2 results in their last 2 games, leaving them top by 10 points over Kings Head. Division 3 still sees Demi A at the top of the pile, with Freemasons A in 2nd with a game to spare.

The battle for player of the season is hotting up in all 3 divisions. In Division 3, Stuart Grix finds himself top winning 14 out of 22 games. Division 2 sees, Ron Moran leading the way winning 20 out of 24 games. Finnians A captain David Wilkinson is currently top player of Division 1, winning 15 out of the 18 games he has played, however this could be the closest the division 1 player of the season has been for years.

A special mention needs to go to the Black Horse Pool team, who raised £1586 in their Poolathon at the Black Horse on 6th December. This money will go towards Derwentside Mind, and Derwent Dementia. Great work! Just a reminder of our Christmas knockout at Finnians, Consett on 22nd December. £10 gets you into a singles, a random scotch doubles and a 1 frame knockout competition. Money will be raised for our charity of the season Derwentside Mind. Competition starts at 12pm with doors opening at 11am. It's the last opportunity for all players to get together and have a drink.

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Two Little Mice



My name is Monique Scott and I am a local illustrator and author promoting my new self published children's book 'Two Little Mice'.

I have recently finished a mini story time event tour around Consett and Stanley area. The story time event includes myself reading Two Little Mice to children from ages 4 and above which is followed by a fun mini craft session showing the children how to make paper mice, then ending with a book signing.

The story is based on myself and my boyfriend Steven O'Neill. We bought our first house together in 2015. It was a lot of hard work renovating our home around our full time jobs. This was a brilliant idea for a storyline which included a powerful message to teach children using vibrant and beautiful illustrations. In the book the two little mice work together as a team, through the good times and the bad, to build their perfect home.

Since my book has been printed, it has been a massive hit! I did not expect so much positive feedback. Friends, family and members of the public have, without hesitation, helped promote me and advertise my book. I have been so touched with all the love and support from everyone.

I now organise local story time events which are followed by a mini craft session and book signings which have taken place in Consett Library, Stanley Library, Juliana's Craft and Gallery and local children's nurseries.

My book is now available on www.amazon.co.uk and if you would like to get in touch to organise a story time event please follow me on facebook: uniquemoniquecreative

Consett Bridge Club



Consett Bridge Club is a friendly little club who play bridge at Blackhill Community Centre on Monday evenings and Thursday afternoons.

As always, we welcome new members to join us. For those who can play the game please turn up five minutes before the session starts; you are welcome to come either individually or in pairs.

For those who have no prior knowledge of the game but are interested in socialising, expanding their memory capacity, learning new skills and enhancing their wellbeing, we are starting a tuition course in March 2020. This course will soon give you the basic skills and enough confidence to come and play with us in regular sessions.

What is Bridge?

It is a card game played by four people, consisting of two teams of two, sitting opposite each other. It is based on the game of whist; the difference being that each pair bid to play the hand.

The unique part is that the partner of the winner of the contract lays their hand face up on the table and the Declarer plays both hands; calling the cards from Dummy, the term given to the hand on the table.

As you can imagine this is what gives the game its uniqueness and appeal. The fascination is that each deal is unpredictable and different from the last. Hence there is always the feeling of newness and excitement surrounding the game.

When introduced to the game it can even keep four teenagers captivated for three hours.

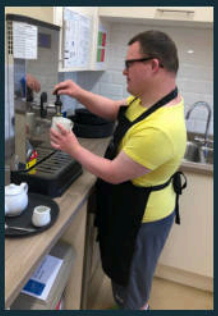
To register interest in joining the tuition course, (times and days to be announced) – Please leave details with Liz Whiting on 01207 659573. More details next month. Consett Bridge Club meet at Blackhill Community Centre: **Mondays 6-9pm / Thursdays 12.45 -3.45pm**

Learning for Life



Learning for Life are a specialist provider of education and day care for adults with high support needs, special educational needs or disabilities and has been operational on No.1 Industrial Park for a number of years.

Recently the college has been providing employment opportunities for it's learners to enrich their experiences through the management of the Oasis For Life Café, based in Citizens House in Consett.



As well as providing productive motivational experiences for it's learners, the programme delivers an excellent service for customers.

I was delighted to visit the Café recently with my daughter and granddaughter and was greatly impressed with the warm welcome given to us on arrival.

There are a wide range of delicious light meals on the menu all at very reasonable prices and along with the service the ambience was excellent. I can highly recommend it and encourage visitors to support this inspirational programme.

As well as working in the popular Café, one learner Christopher Adams is gaining valuable experience on work placement at Lycetts Insurance Brokers.

Learning for Life is a registered charity and North East Specialist provider of services based in Consett, Co Durham. They pride themselves in providing a stimulating and effective learning environment for all young people, including those experiencing more profound and multiple learning and physical difficulties.

Staff at Learning for Life are highly trained, qualified and committed to their role, working together to achieve the best possible outcomes for learners. Learning For Life is place where all learners are valued and treated equally. **www.learninglife.org.uk**

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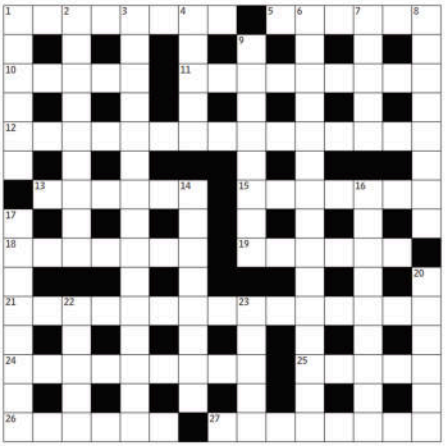
Puzzle Corner

Across

1. Become aware of truck justafter (4,2,2)
5. Cat in piece of ground adjoining old church (6)
10. A chief at the front (5)
11. Odd, Eric pinching c-coin of little value (9)
12. University, a scene of frantic activity in London (9,6)
13. Happy, girl given ring by American (6)
15. A wizard, master playing ball (7)
18. Male with Karen, forced to listen (7)
19. Firework plant (6)
21. The Express newspaper's report? (8,7)
24. Begin industrial action abroad (6,3)
25. State leaders from Iowa detained at Heathrow overnight (5)
26. A lemur? Yes, indeed (3-3)
27. Supports leading baseball player (8) 17

Down

1. Fish one caught in lodge (6)
2. Drink large quantity duringpassage (5,4)
3. Imprisoned naked, yonder, luck having run out (5,4,3,3)
4. Nymph in folklore, a dryad (5)
6. Swindle kind of eccentric comic (10,5)
7. London theatre having a light quality (5)
8. Gathers before dance in confectionery store? (4,4)
9. Bird in sensational headline (8)
14. Authorise punitive action (8)
16. Acerbic, worker after cut (9)
17. Name of country's changed, so I heard (8)
20. Get back about palace revolution (6)
22. Ticket price about 100 for play? (5)
23. Car in fast race (5)(3-3)



Answers for these puzzles will be published on the same page next month.

ASK The VET PRINCE BISHOP VETERINARY HOSPITAL

By Christina Groves
Prince Bishop Veterinary Hospital

Obesity in Pets

Now that the festive period is over, it's a great time to start thinking about your pets' health and wellbeing. Obesity is a HUGE problem in pets and can really impact on an animal's health and quality of life.

Medical problems that are associated with obesity or that can be made worse if your pet is overweight include diabetes, heart disease, osteoarthritis and high blood pressure.

It can be really beneficial to ask for help and advice if you're worried your pet might be overweight and your vet or veterinary nurse will be able to help you with this.

Once any medical problems have been ruled out, increasing exercise levels, reducing food intake or using special diet foods can all help your pet's weight to return to an acceptable level and improve their quality of life.

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