



CARING FOR YOUR SENIOR PET

As your pet ages, many of his basic needs, from diet to exercise, will begin to change. This guide will help you understand what it takes to keep your senior pet happy and healthy. Dogs and cats are very good at hiding their health problems and as an owner, it's your responsibility to keep an eye on them to ensure that you are adjusting their routine to match changes in their body and immune system that make them less able to cope with physical and environmental stresses. Routine exams, preventive medicine and adjustments to your pet's lifestyle can help your pooch stay healthy even as the years creep up.

Watch Out for Senior Health Issues

You and your vet will begin looking for specific issues that become more prevalent as a pet ages. Here's a list of some of these issues:

1. Arthritis
2. Dental disease
3. Cancer
4. Kidney disease
5. Liver disease
6. Bladder and urinary problems
7. Cognitive disorders
8. Intestinal problems
9. Hearing and vision loss

Schedule Regular Wellness Exams

Just as with people, regular health check-ups become increasingly important as dogs and cats grow older. Most experts agree that senior dogs and cats should be seen by a vet at least once every six months. The purpose of these wellness exams is to do three things:

1. Promote your pet's health and longevity.
2. Recognize and control your pet's health risks.
3. Detect any illnesses at their earliest stages, which may improve treatment options.

During this check-up, vets typically check a dog's body for tumors, signs of pain, or arthritis. In addition, your vet will assess your dog's overall appearance and body condition, scanning his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth for irregularities as well as listening to his lungs and heart. A routine check-up may also include various diagnostic tests such as:

1. Complete blood test including CBC and biochemistry test
2. Urinalysis
3. Thyroid function testing
4. Faecal test
5. X-rays

Most veterinarians agree that these baseline laboratory tests should be performed at least once a year in adult dogs ages three to seven years old, and more frequently in senior dogs. These baseline screenings allow your vet to monitor any developing trends in your dog's health status as it changes from year to year. Additional testing



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may be necessary if your dog has any ongoing health issues, or if these routine screenings uncover any unusual results.

Consistently Monitor Your Senior Pet's Health

Many of the illnesses that commonly plague senior pets are obvious even to the untrained eye. So it's important that you monitor changes in your dog's health between regular vet visits. If any of the following signs present themselves, contact your vet immediately.

- Incontinence (sometimes evidenced by accidents in the house)
- Lumps
- Constipation or diarrhoea
- Shortness of breath or other difficulty breathing
- Coughing
- Weakness
- Unusual discharges
- Changes in appetite, water intake, or urination
- Stiffness or limping
- Uncharacteristic aggression or other behavioural changes

Unexplained fluctuations in your dog's weight may be an early sign of an underlying disease. Weight management itself can be a huge factor in your dog's health. Obesity in dogs increases the risk of developing arthritis and a number of other diseases.

Take Action

Along with being more watchful over pet, it's crucial that you keep up with routine preventive care such as parasite prevention, dental care, vaccinations, and nutritional management. As your senior pet's immune system weakens, the importance of routine basic care only increases.

Create a comfortable environment for your aging best friend with easy access to food, supportive bedding, and fresh water whenever he needs it. In addition, plenty of regular attention and affection is good for morale, both yours and your senior dog's.

Adjust Your Home's Comfort Level

Older dogs and cats can't regulate their body temperature as well as they could in their younger days. It is important to keep them warm, dry, and indoors if appropriate. Senior pets are also more sensitive to heat and humidity, so protect them from conditions in which they may overheat.

If your they have arthritis, they may prefer a ramp instead of walking up the stairs, extra blankets on their bed, or even a new bed designed to promote orthopaedic health. If your pet suffers from vision loss, it's a good idea to ease their anxiety by keeping floors clear of clutter. These little things add up.

Don't Forget Dental Care

Plaque and tartar build-up can lead to a number of nasty health problems for your dog or cat. Regular brushing with a specially formulated animal toothpaste can reduce the likelihood of any problems. Discuss with your vet whether your dog should come into the office for a thorough cleaning.