

Maturing Adult Pets

The senior dog and cat have a special place in all of our hearts. They've proven their loyal friendship all these years, and their longevity is living testament to the good care and attention you've given them day in and day out. Keep them happy and healthy with a few special guidelines . . .

PROPER DIET

As animals age, the type of food you feed can really make a difference in their well-being. The ability to process nutrients from the food and handle metabolic by-products can diminish with age, so the proper diet becomes very important for them. It's during the elder years that the metabolism slows down and caloric needs actually decrease. Additionally, it is important to maintain proper body weight. Obesity is unhealthy in any pet, but is especially harmful to the "senior's" heart and other organs. Also, since many older animals start to show signs of arthritis and joint discomfort, unwanted weight gain is especially discouraged. Feed a diet specifically formulated for older dogs and cats.



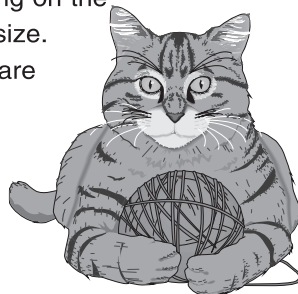
DENTAL EXAMS Check the teeth on a regular basis. The teeth and gumline undergo a significant amount of wear through years. Tooth decay, tooth loss and serious gum infection become common problems we see at our hospital. If left untreated, bacteria from the mouth can spread into the pet's bloodstream, causing infections of other organs, such as the heart, liver and kidney. The beginning sign of tooth or gum disease is often a "bad breath" that an animal has. If you detect this in your pet, a dental examination would be recommended.

PHYSICAL EXAMS Routine veterinary check-ups are important for any stage of life, but even more so for the older pet. Naturally with age, many changes are taking place in the body. Indeed, many maladies that were once easily tolerated before are now more noticeable because the body has a little less resiliency. Symptoms such as "muscle stiffness," "increased thirst" and other changes start to surface. With regular contact between owner and veterinarian, we can all do a better job of managing the effects of these changes and improve the chances of a longer and happier life for your pet.

THE LATER YEARS — Care for the Older Pet

At what age is my pet "old"?

The life span of a dog or cat is short compared to humans, and change occurs rapidly. Though 4 or 5 is young for you, it is technically middle-aged for many dogs, and ages 7 to 9 are usually considered "senior," depending on the dog's breed and size. For cats, 7 to 10 are considered middle-aged and over 10 are the "senior" years of the life cycle.



What are the effects of aging?

As dogs and cats get older their bodies change, even though they may not act noticeably different. Most of these changes are a result of deteriorating body functions such as obesity, arthritis, kidney disease, heart disease, tooth & gum disease, liver disease, behavioral changes, diabetes mellitus, or impaired senses (hearing, sight and smell).

REMEMBER

Mature pets need special attention. Contact your local veterinarian with any questions regarding their care.