

Managing Your Older Pet's Health

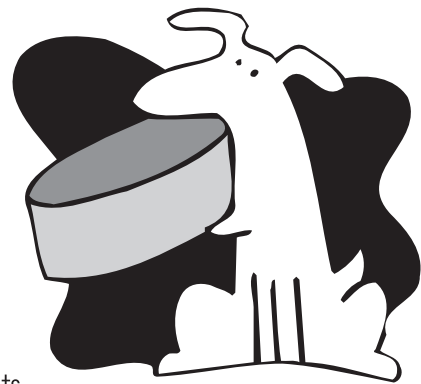
These suggestions will enable you to provide the best health care allowing your dog to live as long as possible.

Annual physical examination

A year between physical examinations for your dog is like four to seven years between annual examinations for us. Once your older pet begins to show signs of age related illness, we recommend physical exams every six months.

Nutrition

Feed the highest quality food you can afford. Premium pet foods such as Science Diet Senior® are formulated with less sodium and fat, and more fiber, than foods made for younger dogs. They are also more digestible and result in a healthier pet with less stool volume. Feed treats made for older dogs as well. Most dog food treats are loaded with salt and fat, which are harmful to older pets. We recommend Science Diet Senior® Treats or other low salt biscuits. Middle aged dogs are often too heavy, while dogs over age 12 may become too thin. Your dog's dietary needs may change several times as he or she ages.



Read labels carefully for sodium, fiber and fat content. Some brands of dog food marketed for older pets are not substantially different from regular pet foods.

Many older animals require specific prescription diets to help manage problems such as heart and kidney disease. Prescription vitamin supplements help keep the skin and coat healthy and fatty acid supplements decrease chronic inflammation such as arthritis or dermatitis.

DO NOT feed table scraps and snacks. Senior animals are more likely to suffer digestive upsets from too much variety in their diets.

Internal Parasites . . .

threaten your dog's health. Older animals are more vulnerable to these parasites. In large numbers they can cause intestinal blockage, bloody diarrhea and even death. Certain types can also affect you and your family. Microscopic examination of your pet's stool needs to be done on a regular basis.

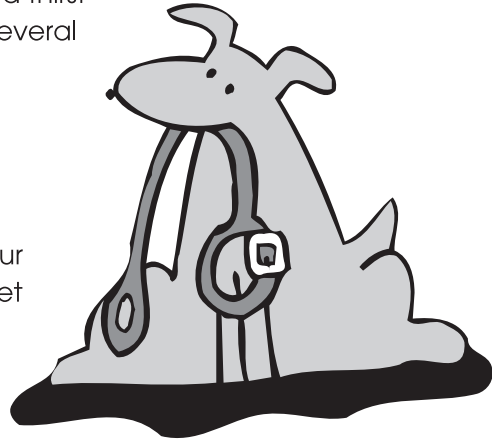


Fresh, clean water

Provide a constant supply of fresh, clean water. Increased thirst and water consumption is a very common symptom of several old-age diseases. Notify us right away if you notice any changes!

Keep your pet under control

Don't let it run loose. Purchase an I.D. Tag to place on your pet's collar and keep it on at all times. It is your pet's "ticket home" if lost. Older animals with poor sight and hearing frequently become lost and disoriented.



Vaccinations and boosters

Unfortunately there is no safe, effective drug available to combat any of the major viral diseases of dogs. Vaccination is the only effective form of protection. Vaccination enables your dog to fight infection by stimulating the immune system so it makes antibodies against the viruses. Older pets have decreased resistance to disease, so keeping their boosters current is very important. To maintain this protection, dogs must be vaccinated regularly so the level of immunity is always high enough to prevent disease. However, some experts now believe that dogs over age 15 have been vaccinated so many times they may no longer need vaccines for some diseases. We may adjust our vaccine protocols when your pet becomes very elderly.

Heartworm Disease

... is serious and deadly. It is carried by mosquitoes. Regular blood testing is needed to check for these parasites and monthly medication is given to prevent this disease.



Dental Care . . .

is just as important for your pet as it is for you. The average lifespan of a dog that receives timely dental care is 10-20% longer than one that doesn't. Infected teeth and gums are very painful to your dog, and also spread infection to the kidneys, heart, liver and elsewhere. Dental cleanings are a necessary component of a long, happy life for your pet.

Prevent Obesity

Extra pounds burden the heart, kidneys, joints and muscles, decreasing life expectancy. Overweight dogs have a 2 year shorter life expectancy and on average develop arthritis 2 years earlier. Cancer is also more common in obese pets.



Groom and trim nails as needed

Keep an eye out for fleas, dandruff, sores or bald spots. Contact us if you notice any abnormalities. Tumors in or beneath the skin are very common in older pets. Many of these are benign, not cancerous, but early detection and removal of tumors is very important. A dry, dull haircoat is common in older pets. Vitamin supplements or special shampoos are often needed.



Flea Control . . .

is essential. Preventing fleas with regular use of effective flea products is much less costly than treating a full blown infestation of fleas in your home. DO NOT waste your money on over-the-counter flea products. Most do not work and some can even be harmful to your pet, especially if he or she has heart problems or is taking medication. Our products provide good control and we will take the time to individualize a flea program to suit your requirements and budget.

Never give human medications to your dog without checking with us.

Report any changes or problems . . .

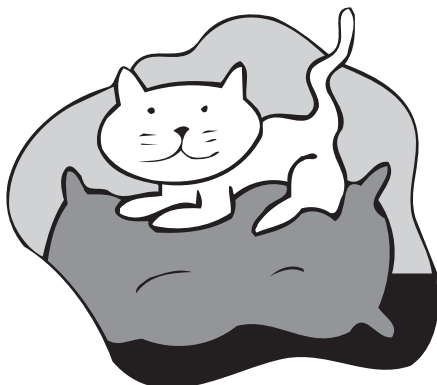
in your dog's health or behavior to your veterinarian as soon as possible. Diseases or behavior problems usually are more successfully treated the earlier they are addressed.

As your dog ages . . .

Laboratory workups help detect many of the problems caused by aging (kidney, liver, heart, arthritis, dental disease etc.). Early detection can lengthen your pet's life. Proper treatment will improve your pet's quality of life.

If your pet's eyesight is impaired ...

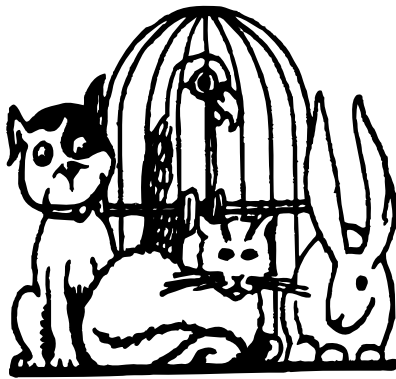
avoid moving furniture or other familiar objects in the home unnecessarily. A dab of perfume or other scent on doorways, table legs, etc. will help even a blind pet to get around with little difficulty.



Keep your older pet dry and warm.

Tolerance to both heat and cold decreases with age. Warmth also lessens symptoms of arthritis.





OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR PET ARE:

Food: _____

Vitamins/Supplements: _____

Dental care: _____

Surgery: _____

Laboratory testing: _____

Exercise: _____

Preventative health care is much more than just vaccinations! We are here to help you assist your pet in living a long, healthy life at the lowest cost to you.

Caring People Helping Pets



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