

## Senior Pet Care

Growing old is not easy – for our pets or us. There are so many physical, emotional and mental issues that accompany the aging process. Many of us are burdened with increased physical as well as mental limitations, and we find ourselves unaccustomed to being able to perform tasks that we found easy to accomplish during our younger years.

Just as is the case with human beings, some pets age more gracefully and easily than others. In this wonderful age of advanced technology, we have learned to improve the quality and increase the longevity of both animal and human lives.

The following are some simple and direct ways of prolonging the lives of our beloved animal companions.

As your pet approaches his senior years, pay close attention to any physical or behavioral changes taking place. Make it a special point to closely observe any changes in his physical condition, personality or behavior. Is he shyer, reticent, lethargic or is he more aggressive, assertive or dominant? Is he physically slower and less agile than he has been? Does he slow down more quickly and recoil from playtime or interaction. Does he seem to want to isolate or withdraw from interaction with his family members or buddies? You know your pet better than anyone else – it is up to you to note any changes in his personality, overall health and behavior. If you are concerned about any of the above, take your dog to your vet. Consult with your vet to determine the best health care and nutritional program for your pet.

Pet and feel your animal companion often, and check for any unusual lumps, bumps, areas of sensitivity, or pain, redness or swelling, wounds or patchy, raw skin, excessive panting or drooling. Being proactive is the best way to protect your pet from any serious illnesses or potential health problems.

As your pet grows older, take him to the vet more frequently in order to determine if he has any conditions or potential conditionals that may require a special exercise regime, supplements or diet.

As your pet ages, you may witness many changes. He may be slowing down. Look for subtle changes in the way he gets up or sits down and deals with stairs. Arthritis is common among older dogs – especially the larger breeds. Another possible cause for slowing down is hypothyroidism, an endocrine disorder in older dogs.

Graying around the muzzle may also be a sign that your pet is aging. Most dogs begin to show graying at around five or six years old.

Reduced vision or hearing may also be indications that your pet is aging. If you suspect that your pet is experiencing diminished sight or hearing, take extra care to protect him from hazards. On walks, keep your dog on a leash at all times.

Check your pet's mouth and teeth. With proper dental care and food, you can decrease the chances of him developing periodontal disease.

Check your pet's eyes for signs of cloudiness, irritation, redness or discharge.

Flea and tick as well as heartworm prevention should be administered on a regular basis.

Massaging your pet can prove beneficial to your pet and can help you detect any abnormalities early on before they develop into more serious conditions.

Today, there are so many ways of providing quality care for your senior pet including a variety of holistic and homeopathic modalities in addition to traditional veterinary medicine. However, most important to the increased longevity and quality of life for your pet is your love and care for him.