

Caring for Your Senior Pet

Guelph – ON, One thing pet owners can agree on is that we want our pets to live as long as possible - forever would be ideal!

As our beloved pets grow older, it can be difficult to watch them begin to show signs of decline, and it's common for pet owners to think of aging as a disease. However, aging is not a disease – it's a progressive process in which the pet's body may lose the ability to maintain normal bodily functions or respond to environmental factors.

Signs such as limping, losing weight, or changes in drinking or eating habits are often not due to "getting old" – they may actually be symptoms of diseases that could be alleviated with proper nutrition and medical care.

Some signs of aging are obvious and can be seen easily, such as a greying coat. However, most signs of aging are more difficult to see, so that's why it's important to work with your veterinarian.

What can you do for your aging pet?

- Pay close attention to subtle changes – nobody knows your pet better than you do!
- Make sure your pet receives an annual examination from your veterinarian – they are trained to pick up on changes, and can diagnose and treat disease before it worsens. It's not uncommon for pets who come in for a routine check-up to have one or more abnormalities appear on their examination or blood tests, even when they appear healthy.
- Ask your veterinarian to perform a nutritional assessment to determine the diet best suited for your pet. Proper nutrition becomes even more critical as dogs and cats are aging, and the best diet for your pet will allow for a healthier skin and coat, a well-functioning digestive system, strong muscles, and support for internal organs.

As unrealistic as forever is, you're definitely able to positively influence your pet's quality of life! With nutritious food, routine preventative care and close monitoring of any subtle changes in your pet, you may be able to prevent a disease associated with aging or catch it earlier and slow its progression. Which means more time to share with your happy, healthy companion through their golden years.

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