

## Senior Animal Care

Age should not be considered a disease but rather a manifestation of the body's diminished repair response. As an animal ages progressive changes may occur. This can include an altered immune response, decreased respiratory capacity and metabolic rate, increased tissue fragility, loss of muscle and nerve cells, changes within the eye, wrinkling of the skin and less controlled elimination of stool and urine. Similar to people, when animals age they tend to need additional care. The following information is intended to educate you and your family on how to maintain and help improve your pet's quality of life.

Although you've been feeding your animal for years, it is important to revisit nutrition. At this age many animals may be experiencing pain associated with arthritis. A healthy weight is the best way to achieve comfort for animals with arthritis. Since their metabolism and activity have decreased, their caloric needs are also reduced. Please be prepared to have a detailed discussion with the veterinarian about the food that you are feeding. This will include specific amounts and timing of feeding. Please also consider any treats and snacks in the daily allowance as well.

The next important factor in your animal's life is exercise. We commonly hear people say that they have noticed their animals becoming stiff or sleeping more. Some people feel that this is an indication that their animal should not go for walks and that they should not engage them in play. In reality it is important to have your animal exercise every day. The minimum recommendation for exercise is 40-60 minutes per day. Please discuss with the veterinarians and healthcare team helpful ways to engage your pets in play as well as recommendations for length and types of appropriate exercise.

Preventive care continues to be just as, if not more, important as when your pet was younger. Although this continues to include annual examinations you may want to discuss additional measures such as comprehensive blood testing, vaccines titers, etc. We have included multiple handouts and questionnaires in this packet in an effort to help you evaluate your pet in its home environment. This will help us determine what additional measures may be appropriate to take.

We recommend that you take the time before your appointment to perform a thorough home examination on your pet. Not only should you observe your animal moving or sleeping (specifically how they get up and lie down, whether they are willing to climb stairs or jump onto things and how they play), but also take the time to feel all over their body for any changes (lumps, bumps or areas of discomfort). Also, please take note of any changes in hearing and/or vision. At this age mobility and flexibility can decline and it is important to look for early signs of these changes so that we can help your pets before the problem becomes debilitating. We always recommend frequently grooming (including nail trims) for your pets. We are happy to help instruct you on techniques and supplies that can help you with this.

We would like you to consider us part of your team when it comes to your pet's health and well-being. For this reason we welcome you to ask questions during your pet's appointment as well as contacting us through phone or email with additional questions or concerns throughout the year.

Thank you again for entrusting us with your pet's care!  
The Sequist Animal Hospital Team

## Interesting Facts About Senior Pets

- A pet's mouth health is just as important as our own. Dental disease is present in the majority of animals by age 2 and can lead to liver, kidney and heart disease. We are happy to instruct you on how to brush your pet's teeth as well as the appropriate supplements which can be a helpful complement to a brushing routine.
- Do you know the most beneficial steps you can take to combat your pet's arthritis? It's simple, cheap and effective.....exercise and weight loss! Decreasing your pet's weight makes mobility easier and the movement of low-impact, moderate exercise helps to lubricate the joints. Please speak to us about an appropriate diet and exercise plan for your pet.
- Health insurance is now available for our animal companions - if you are interested in more information, please speak with one of our veterinarians or staff members for more details.
- Lameness and stiffness are not a sign of aging; they are a sign of arthritis. Arthritis is a chronic degeneration of joint(s) which leads to decreased flexibility, decreased mobility, inflammation and pain. The good news is that there are many different products which, combined with exercise and diet, can help our animals move more comfortably.
- Did you know that pets can have Cognitive Dysfunction? This can lead to confusion, activity changes, sleep cycle alterations and other behavioral changes. Please see the information enclosed and alert us if you are seeing any of these changes in your pet.
- A recent report estimates that 45% of US dogs and 58% of cats are considered overweight. That is an estimated 89 million pets that are at a high risk for developing (or exacerbating) conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, certain cancers and other health problems. Additionally, an overweight pet's lifespan can be decreased by as much as 2-3 years.
- Metabolic rates decrease for aging animals which can lead to as much as a 30-40% decrease in caloric need.
- Did you know that a blood test can be performed to see if your animal is protected against certain diseases such as rabies, distemper and parvovirus? Please discuss whether this testing (called vaccine titers) are appropriate for your animal instead of vaccines.

Average Life Stages for Dogs and Cats

Life Stage:	Cats	Dogs: small & medium	Dogs: large & giant
Pediatric	Birth - 6 months	Birth - 6 months	Birth - 6 months
Young adult	7 months - 6 years	7 months - 5 years	7 months - 2 years
Mature Adult	7 - 9 years	6 - 9 years	3 - 5 years
Senior	10 - 14 years	9 - 12 years	6 - 9 years
Geriatric	15+ years	12+ years	9+ years

**Follow this link for more information and resources on senior felines.**

