

## SENIOR CARE

Millions of pets are living longer because of advances in nutrition and veterinary care. These older pets have problems veterinarians didn't used to see when the average pet lived only until age 7. Many new products are geared toward these furry senior citizens. Some of the more interesting are pet foods from Iams, Hill's and Nutro that contain fatty acids and glucosamine to help pets with arthritis, and new medications to help with senility in dogs.

Pets are living longer nowadays because of better nutrition and modern health care, and because so many lead sheltered, indoor lives. This means that if they suffer from painful conditions like arthritis or periodontal disease as they get older, they may be suffering literally for years. As a concerned pet owner you need to pay attention to your pet's behavior, understand the signs of pain in pets, and provide regular veterinary exams.

Pay close attention to your cat or dog as he or she ages. Start tracking his behavior, so if signs of pain or dysfunction start to appear you can recognize and treat them before they become severe. Some diseases to watch for would be arthritis, kidney or heart problems or cancer. Problems such as lumps, changes in the skin and coat or differences in behavior should be brought to your veterinarian's attention at once. Any of these symptoms may be caused by many different diseases – thyroid disorders, for example, commonly lead to changes in behavior.

Your veterinarian will need to do a thorough physical exam and lab testing to find the problem affecting a particular pet.

Signs of altered brain function occur frequently in older pets. They can be subtle at first but tend to progress with time. They may include pacing, wandering as if lost, sleeping more or less or seeming disoriented or confused. With a new medication called Anipryl you may be able to slow or reverse the changes in brain function that occur with a specific disease of dogs called Canine Cognitive Dysfunction.

Laboratory testing or X-rays are essential to diagnose and treat age-related problems. Thyroid and adrenal gland problems, painful conditions such as arthritis, or liver or heart disease can all cause altered behavior in pets.

Many treatments exist to help pets as they age. There are nutritional supplements, disease treatments, special diets and pain medications for arthritis in dogs and cats. Safe and effective supplements and anti-inflammatory drugs that can help make your pet's senior years much less debilitating and painful. New diets from Eukanuba, Hill's and Nutromax contain nutritional additives that slow the progression of arthritis and reduce joint inflammation. Learn to recognize the signs of pain in dogs and cats, and be sure to use appropriate medical or dietary therapy when signs appear.

Most pets suffer pain in silence. Whining and crying are **not** typical signs of pain in pets. Rather, you will notice that your pet sleeps more, interacts with you less, seems less interested in play or activities, shows stiffness or lameness on rising or with exercise, or has difficulty eating or chewing. Know the signs!

According to a recent study, **46% of pets with arthritis are under-medicated for pain**. Arthritis is usually worst in cold or damp weather. Pain medication not only makes pets feel better but it also reduces inflammation and slows the progression of this debilitating disease. Nutritional supplements are also very helpful to preserve a pet's quality of life and improve the health of the joints.