

**HOLT VETERINARY CLINIC
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HEALTH TIPS FOR YOUR PET'S SENIOR YEARS

WITH PROPER CARE YOUR PET MAY LIVE FAR LONGER THAN HE OR SHE MAY HAVE ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO. Consequently, geriatric medicine (the care of the aged) has come into greater demand: In our minds, more is known about geriatric medicine because pet owners have shown a sense of commitment and responsibility for their pet's well-being (some of our most lasting relationships may be formed with our pets). As people have chosen to take cats and dogs into their homes or backyard pens on a permanent basis, they have included them in a closer relationship with themselves and taken greater note of the pet's medical needs.

THE INCREASE IN LIFE EXPECTANCY FOR A PET RECEIVING GOOD NUTRITIONAL, MEDICAL AND HUMANE CARE IS NOT REALLY SURPRISING. But, you need to be aware that the aged pet may require far more medical care. This increase in care is the same whether the cat or dog is male or female. Folklore that the female of the species, often being hardier, is somehow also protected from the consequences of aging, dies hard. As a pet owner, you may notice hard-to-explain changes in your pet's behavior. When grooming and petting your cat or dog, you are the first one to detect lumps and note unusual odors of the mouth, ears, or coat. These alert you to a possible medical problem.

DIETARY SUPERVISION MAY NEED TO BE INCREASED to reduce the demands that obesity place on heart and respiratory function as well as on aged hip and knee joints. Increased dental attention is required to safeguard gums and prevent kidney and heart disease. As with humans, the likelihood of prostate gland disease in male dogs, and the likelihood of uterine infections in intact females increases with age.

SOME CHANGES MAY BE GRADUAL these may include neurologic deterioration causing mood changes, loss of learned responses, hearing and vision loss, urinary, and/or bowel incontinence. You may also notice skin and coat problems including cysts, warts and benign growths, excessive dryness and scaling of the skin, coat loss, and dry, brittle nails.

THIS IS A TIME FOR THE OWNER TO CONTINUE WITH THE CARE THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN OFFERED and not to succumb to withdrawing from their pet. Continued vaccination, parasite control, and dental care top our list of recommendations for care of the mature dog and cat. Modification of diet to supply energy

without leading to obesity, and proper exercise are close second recommendations. Above all, regular veterinary examinations help identify conditions that will respond to home management or veterinary intervention.

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON AND UNTIL RECENTLY ONE OF THE MORE DIFFICULT TO TREAT AFFLICTIONS OF OLDER PETS IS OSTEOARTHRITIS, a painful degenerative joint disease most often affecting the joints of the legs and spine. Among the common causes of osteoarthritis are injury, or problems such as hip dysplasia, osteochondritis, or intervertebral disc disease. Whatever the initial cause, the result is frequently the same, an inflamed and painful joint(s).

THE SYMPTOMS OF OSTEOARTHRITIS ARE THE RESULT OF PAIN and include lameness, stiffness, difficulty rising from a resting position, and reluctance to walk, climb stairs, jump, or play. Cold weather, sudden weather changes, or heavy exercise often increase the severity of the symptoms. Many pets, reluctant to move because of the arthritic pain, become overweight which in turn makes weight bearing arthritic joints even more painful.

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED HOW FREQUENTLY THE WORD "PAIN" IS USED IN DESCRIBING ARTHRITIS. This is because the majority of problems caused by arthritis are directly related to pain. When we decrease pain, we decrease many of the debilitating effects of arthritis. To this end, we have been helped by the introduction of several new potent analgesic anti-inflammatory drugs. Rimadyl, Deramaxx, Previcox and Meloxicam, to name a few. All of these drugs greatly reduce arthritic pain levels with minimal side effects. As with all long term use medications we periodically need to do blood tests to monitor for liver and gastrointestinal problems. Since the introduction of these anti-inflammatory drugs, many dogs that were previously unresponsive to pain management have achieved marked improvement.

While there is no cure yet for osteoarthritis, we can now more safely improve joint function, restore activity levels, decrease the pain of the disease, and often noticeably improve your dogs enjoyment of life.

UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO DO SO BY YOUR VETERINARIAN, NEVER GIVE YOUR CAT OR DOG OVER-THE-COUNTER PAIN MEDICINES USED FOR YOU. SOME OF THEM ARE DEADLY TO YOUR PET.

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE CAN BE ANSWERED BY CALLING OUR OFFICE.
PRACTICE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, SURGERY AND DENTISTRY