

Caring For An Old Friend



As your pets approach their senior years, you may notice subtle changes in their behavior—a slower gait, less desire to play, and a gradual decrease in energy. Age can weaken the immune system and increase an animal's vulnerability to many of the same health problems that plague older people, such as arthritis, diabetes, dental problems, cancer, and loss of hearing and vision.

Today, most diseases associated with old age can be treated or controlled. That's why it's even more important to take your senior pet in for an annual physical. Your veterinarian may even suggest taking a blood and urine sample to check various physical functions, like the kidneys or thyroid. In younger pets, this usually isn't done regularly, but it is very important for older pets.

You'll also need to be more attentive to your old friend. Be sure there's always a warm spot for your pet to lie on, perhaps even a warm heating pad (be careful!). And be aware that your pet may no longer be able to jump onto places where he had before, so move his dishes and bedding onto lower surfaces.

Dramatic advances in veterinary medicine, along with healthier diets, neutering, and keeping pets indoors, have all contributed to pets living longer and healthier lives. In fact, the life expectancy of pets has more than doubled during the past 50 years, giving pet owners many bonus years in which to enjoy their special companions.

While time may slow the body, the bond between you and your pets will continue to deepen with age. And with proper nutrition, regular exercise, and attentive care, there's no reason that your pets' "golden years" can't be their best years with you.



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