

Pawsitive Press

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Senior Pets

By: Wade Matthews D.V.M.

It's a reality that all of us and our pets will face if we are healthy enough to live long, becoming senior citizens. Older pets face many of the same problems that older people face. As pet owners we may see arthritic changes, eye problems, senility, elimination disorders, lethargy and weight gain or loss. Some of these changes are normal but sometimes these changes are signs of underlying issues and are always better addressed earlier rather than later.

My pet seems fine and he is eating well, why should I get him examined by a veterinarian?

Owners are very astute when it comes to the normal routine of their pets: how much they drink, where they sleep, how much they eat, when they need to go to the bathroom. This is very useful information for veterinarians when it comes to getting a history. Veterinarians know what a spleen feels like, what an abnormal heartbeat is, what normal teeth should look like, what early stages of glaucoma or cataracts look like, what the size and



color for the mucous membranes are. Using both the history and the physical exam together is an excellent way to determine the health of a pet. I have had many well educated, loving pet owners come in for regular yearly shots, not thinking there was anything wrong with their pet, to find out that their pet had major health problems. How many times have you felt bad and continued to eat, drink and go through your normal day? Pets have a tendency to not complain. It is our responsibility as pet owners and veterinarians to be diligent in assessing their overall health.

My veterinarian would like to run lab work on my pet but why?

As helpful as a physical exam is, there are many things that veterinarians cannot see, feel or hear, and some of these things are very common problems in older pets. In older cats the three most common disorders are

hyperthyroidism, diabetes and renal failure. These diseases must be found with lab work. Cats will not show any signs of kidney failure until about 75% of their kidney function is lost. We need to diagnose it as soon as possible in order to give them the best chance to do well. With older dogs we see hypothyroidism, diabetes and liver issues, which are impossible to find without lab work. I have seen many dogs who did not have an enlarged liver on a physical exam yet lab work showed they had a major problem with their liver. One of the problems we face as veterinarians is that we are presented with many pets when the disease process has progressed too far for us to do anything much about it. It is always easier to help a disease situation in the earlier stages rather than when it has already spread. Pets are living longer and in less pain because owners are more informed about what they can do to help their senior pet.

If you have any questions or concerns about your pet, please feel free to call the office. We are here to help!

Senior Pet Care (FAQ)

Due to improved veterinary care and dietary habits, pets are living longer now than they ever have before. One consequence of this is that pets, along with their owners and veterinarians, are faced with a whole new set of age-related conditions. In recent years there has been extensive research on the problems facing older pets and how their owners and veterinarians can best handle their special needs.

Q: When does a pet become "old"?

A: It varies, but cats and small dogs are generally considered geriatric at the age of 7. Larger breed dogs tend to have shorter life spans and are considered geriatric when they are approximately 6 years of age. Owners tend to want to think of their pet's age in human terms. While it is not as simple as "1 human year = X cat/dog years", there are calculations that can help put a pet's age in human terms:

Age: Human Equivalents for Older Pets

Cat years	Human years
7	45
10	58
15	75
20	98

Dog years	Human years (*dog size lbs)
7	Small – Medium: 44-47
	Large – Very large: 50-56
10	Small – Medium: 56-60
	Large – Very large: 66-78
15	Small – Medium: 76-83
	Large – Very large: 93-115
20	Small – Medium: 96-105
	Large: 120

*Small: 0-20 lbs; Medium: 21-50 lbs; Large: 51-90 lbs; Very large: >90 lbs
 The oldest recorded age of a cat is 34 years. The oldest recorded age of a dog is 29 years.



CAT YEARS	HUMAN YEARS
7	54
10	63
15	78
20	97



DOG YEARS	HUMAN YEARS (small to very large dogs)*
7	44 to 56
10	56 to 78
15	76 to 115
20	96 to 120

Age: Estimated Human Equivalents for Older Pets

*Small: 0-20 lbs; Medium: 21-50 lbs; Large: 51-90 lbs; Very large: >90 lbs

Q: My older pet is exhibiting changes in behavior. What's going on?

A: Before any medical signs become apparent, behavioral changes can serve as important indicators that something is changing in an older pet, which may be due to medical or other reasons. As your pet's owner, you serve a critical role in detecting early signs of disease because you interact and care for your pet on a daily basis and are familiar with your pet's behavior and routines. If your pet is showing any change in behavior or other warning signs of disease, contact your veterinarian and provide them with a list of the changes you have observed in your pet. Sometimes, the changes may seem contradictory - such as an older pet that has symptoms of hearing loss but also seems more sensitive to strange sounds.

Possible Behavior Changes in Older Pets

- Increased reaction to sounds
- Increased vocalization
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Decreased interaction w/humans
- Increased irritability
- Decreased response to commands
- Increased aggressive/protective behavior
- Increased anxiety
- House soiling
- Decreased self-hygiene/grooming
- Repetitive activity
- Increased wandering
- Change in sleep cycles





Florida's Flea Season!



As you may know, flea season is every season in Florida. The weather never gets cold enough to wipe fleas out, so they are with us all year long. As we inch closer to the summer months you may notice that Fido or Fluffy may have more and more fleas. Even those pets that have never had a flea issue, may have one, especially during the hotter summer months. Understanding what options are available to help your pet through the summer months will keep you and your pets comfortable and hopefully flea free! Here is a brief over view on a variety of flea preventions that may make your decision on what brand to use a little less tricky.

Here are the products that we carry in the hospital and recommend highly:

- **Nexgard** - NexGard Chewables for Dogs are the first and only soft beef-flavored chew approved to kill both fleas and ticks for a full month. Nexgard is given orally once every thirty days. Nexgard requires a veterinarian prescription for purchase.
- **Comfortis** - Comfortis is a tablet you give to your cat or dog to kill fleas and prevent flea infestations for one month. It works by attacking the nervous system of insects, causing rapid death of adult fleas. Comfortis requires a veterinarian prescription for purchase
- **Trifexis** - Trifexis is a monthly tablet for dogs only. Trifexis kills fleas and prevents flea infestations, treats and controls hookworms, whipworms and roundworms, and prevents heartworm disease. The flea prevention in Trifexis is the same as Comfortis. Trifexis requires a veterinarian prescription for purchase.
- **Advantage Multi** - Advantage Multi for Dogs and Cats is a convenient, monthly topical solution that, when applied directly to your pet's skin prevents heartworm disease, kills adult fleas and treats flea infestations, treats and controls roundworm and hookworm infestations, and treats and controls ear mite infestations. Advantage Multi requires a veterinarian prescription for purchase.
- **Advantage II** - Advantage II controls against all flea life stages. Kills through contact. Fleas don't have to bite to die. Advantage II comes in a monthly topical application for both cats and dogs. Advantage II is an over the counter flea prevention.
- **Frontline and Frontline Tritak** - This is a fast killing monthly topical for the control of fleas and ticks. It is available for both cats and dogs. Frontline and Frontline Tritak are over the counter flea and tick prevention.

These products are available through our online pharmacy at www.ahofd.vetsfirstchoice.com

- **Sentinel** - Sentinel is a unique soft beef and bacon flavored chewable that provides 6 in 1 protection against heartworms, roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, fleas, and tapeworms in dogs. Sentinel is given orally once every month. Sentinel requires a veterinarian prescription for purchase.
- **Cheristin** - Cheristin is a once-a-month topical solution for the prevention and treatment of flea infestations for cats. Cheristin starts killing flea in 30 minutes. Cheristin requires a veterinarian prescription for purchase.
- **Simparica** - Simparica kills adult fleas, and is indicated for the treatment and prevention of flea infestations, and the treatment and control of tick infestations for one month in dogs. Simparica is a pork-liver flavored monthly oral tablet. Simparica requires a veterinarian prescription for purchase.

Please feel free to call the office with any questions you may have regarding the best product for flea prevention for your pet. We are here to help!



Animal Hospital
OF DUNEDIN
Caring for Pets with Love and Kindness

\$1

\$1 First Exam - New Patient

(\$49-\$80 Savings)

Includes comprehensive physical exam and one vaccine. Does not include 3yr Rabies vaccine or Holistic/Acupuncture appointments. Must be presented at the time of purchase. Coupon may not be combined with any other offer.

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“Caring for pets with love and kindness since 1977”



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www.ahofd.com



Animal Hospital
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-10%

10% Off Dental Cleaning

(Call for an appointment today 727-733-9351)

Discount applies to anesthesia, prophylaxis, and any other dental radiographs or extractions that might be needed. Offer excludes required pre-dental labwork. May not be combined with any other coupons or discounts. Must be presented at the time of purchase.

Expires 5/31/17 NL



Animal Hospital
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Caring for Pets with Love and Kindness

2 Months Free Advantage Multi

(\$36.00 - \$42.00 savings)

Buy one 6 pack of Advantage Multi and get 2 months same size free. Patient must have been seen by a doctor at the Animal Hospital of Dunedin within the past year. May not be combined with any other offer. Coupon must be presented at the time of purchase.

Expires 5/31/17 NL