
The Older and Geriatric Pet



We would all like to minimise the signs of ageing and ensure our pets have an optimum quality of life to the end. In order to do this we must consider the changes that take place and what we can do, if anything, to avert them.

When is a pet old?

There is species and breed variation in what might constitute "old". For instance, a ten year old Siamese may not be old, whereas a ten year old Great Dane usually is. For veterinary purposes however, it is usual to consider old as being over eight years of age.

Common Complaints of ageing organs

Heart & Circulation

Heart disease is relatively common for both dogs and cats. Smaller dogs often get heart valve leakage, whereas larger dogs and cats are more prone to heart muscle disease. Dogs usually become increasingly breathless, often coughing, whereas cats may merely become less active.

Kidneys and Liver

Dogs commonly show signs of liver disease with age whereas cats are more prone to kidney failure. Both may be noticed as an increase in thirst and urine production, sometimes with weight loss

Skin

Dry coats, grey hair, dandruff, and reduced grooming are common signs of ageing. The skin may become thin, less elastic and tear

easily.

Joints and Muscles

Old animals are usually less mobile. There is often a combination of joint arthritis along with muscle weakness, sometimes compounded by poor nerve function, all leading to disuse muscle wastage. It is not uncommon for the bigger dogs to finally become unable to get up at all.

Nervous System

Not only do the peripheral nerves to the limbs deteriorate, so also does the brain. Old animals may become senile, losing house training or behaving oddly.

Senses

Deteriorating eyesight may be due to either cataracts in the lenses or failure of the retinae. Cataracts can be removed.

T e e t h a n d

Gums

Progressive build up of tartar on the teeth results in gum and tooth infections.

There is evidence that this is a strong contributing factor in kidney and heart failure in cats and dogs. Cleaner teeth may mean a longer life.

Cancers

Although far less common than feared all older animals may develop tumours. Early detection must always improve the chances of removal or treatment where possible.

Obesity

A gradual increase in weight over life may result in an obese geriatric. Further stresses are placed on both skeletal and cardiovascular systems. There are "Senior" diets available at the clinic addressing these special needs.

There is good evidence to link cleaner teeth with a longer life for both cats and dogs.

How Can We Help?

Regular Examinations

For your pet to see the vet every six months is equivalent to you going to the doctor every two to three years. You would have to be a pretty fit seventy year old not to exceed that! We may suggest six monthly examinations for specific problems such as tooth or heart disease or may do a more general "Older Pet Check". One check up would usually coincide with the annual vaccination.

Dental

Dogs and cats that have bad teeth may benefit from six monthly checks, regular descaling, oral disinfectants and checks of kidney function.

Cardiac

Pets on heart treatments usually need at least one check up every six months. This may involve an ECG, possible blood testing for evidence of poor blood supply to organs, and occasional chest X-rays.

The "Older Pet Check"

This full examination may include a blood profile, ECG and urine test. A bloods screen examines cell counts and organ function, particularly liver and kidney. ECGs (electrocardiographs) are specifically used to diagnose heart disease. Urine analysis provides a simple fast multiple check on health. Although not infallible such examinations help in the early diagnosis of disease. We can choose the depth of examination to suit the patients needs.

We offer three "Senior Petsavers":

1. Gold - Vaccine, 6m Exam, ECG, blood, urine £65
2. Silver - Vaccine, 6m Exam, blood, urine £45
3. Bronze- Vaccine, 6m Exam, urine £25

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Your Pet's Records

Name	Breed
D.O.B	Target Wt kg

Date	Next Appt
Urine <input type="checkbox"/>	Blood <input type="checkbox"/> ECG <input type="checkbox"/> Wt kg
Comments	

Date	Next Appt
Urine <input type="checkbox"/>	Blood <input type="checkbox"/> ECG <input type="checkbox"/> Wt kg
Comments	

Date	Next Appt
Urine <input type="checkbox"/>	Blood <input type="checkbox"/> ECG <input type="checkbox"/> Wt kg
Comments	

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Date	Next Appt
Urine <input type="checkbox"/>	Blood <input type="checkbox"/> ECG <input type="checkbox"/> Wt kg
Comments	

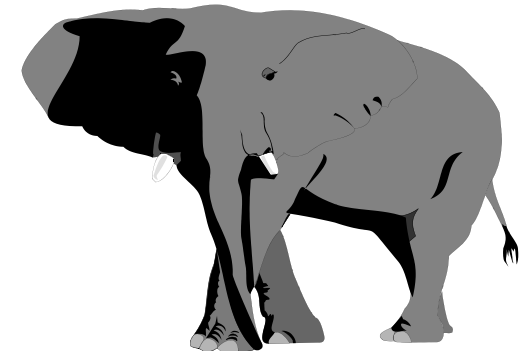
Date	Next Appt
Urine <input type="checkbox"/>	Blood <input type="checkbox"/> ECG <input type="checkbox"/> Wt kg
Comments	

Date	Next Appt
Urine <input type="checkbox"/>	Blood <input type="checkbox"/> ECG <input type="checkbox"/> Wt kg
Comments	

*Don't forget to bring this record
in with you on each visit.*

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Caring for the Older Pet



Hamilton Pet Clinic
110 Boundary Road
St. John's Wood NW8 0171 722 3381

Park Pet Clinic
116 Regents Park Road
Finchley N3 1433 0181 343

Primrose Hill Pet Clinic
138 Gloucester Avenue
NW1 0171 586 8806

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