

Caring for Your Senior Pet



How do I know if my pet is a senior pet?

Pets age at different rates than humans age. Dogs and cats age approximately 7 years to our one year. Large breed dogs such as Great Danes are considered senior at 6 years old, while smaller breeds such as miniature poodles are considered senior between 8 and 10 years of age.

What signs of aging can my pet exhibit?

Just like people, each pet is different, but you may notice some of the following indications of aging:

- **Less energy as your pet gets older**
- **A reluctance to sit or rise due to stiffness in the joints**
- **A blue haziness in your pet's eyes** – This can be a normal effect of aging called nuclear sclerosis. Nuclear sclerosis does not typically affect vision; you should have your pet's eyes checked by a doctor to ensure that any cloudiness is not caused by a more serious problem such as cataracts.
- **Age-related hearing loss** – This can result in your pet being easily startled if you approach from behind, or he/she is harder to wake from sleeping. If you feel your pet has any hearing loss, you should speak with your veterinarian to rule out any other medical problems.
- **Small masses or lumps in different areas on their body** – Having a mass examined and aspirated (a sample of the cells taken with a needle similar to drawing a blood sample) is the only sure way of determining if it poses a health risk. You should let your veterinarian know about any mass, existing or new that you find on your pet.

- **An increase in the daily water consumption** – This can be a serious symptom of several disorders common in senior pets:

- Diabetes
- Liver and kidney disease
- Hormonal disorders

Your veterinarian can suggest certain blood and urine tests that can help identify potential problems early.

- **Dental disease** – Dental care is important at any age, but it is especially important for our senior pets. Chronic tartar accumulation and gingivitis can adversely affect other organs of the body such as the heart, liver and kidneys. A good home dental care plan and annual professional annual dental cleanings can help your pet keep all of their teeth well into their senior years and beyond. Your Banfield medical team can suggest several options for effective home dental care.

What is the best way to care for my senior pet?

It is important to have your pet examined by a veterinarian twice a year to properly diagnose any age-related diseases. Early detection of illness allows for early intervention and a better prognosis for your pet. Blood work is commonly recommended every six months to help detect subtle changes that may otherwise go unseen. If a problem is detected, your pet's doctor will prescribe a treatment plan that is appropriate for your pet's condition. This might mean long-term medication or a change of diet.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

Is my pet in pain?

Arthritis may appear as pet's age and pets may also grow more sensitive to changes in temperature. An arthritic pet may be very uncomfortable in colder environments. An x-ray can help diagnose arthritis. Your pet's doctor may prescribe oral pain medication to help with the inflammation and discomfort caused by arthritis. Routine blood work is usually performed prior to beginning a pain medication regiment and annually throughout treatment to assess liver and kidney function.

Should I feed my pet a different diet?

Metabolism slows for senior pets, thus they do not need as many calories as younger pets do. It is recommended to feed your pet a food that is specific for seniors. Talk to your Banfield medical team to find out which diet is right for your pet's specific needs. With the proper care, your senior pets can live for a very long time.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, contact your Banfield hospital team



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