

SOUTH EAST COUNTRY VETS

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AGEING PETS

WHAT IS A SENIOR PET?

Small and medium dog breeds (<25kg) and cats are classed as senior when they reach 7 years old, whilst larger dog breeds (>25kg) are seniors when they reach 5 years old.

WHY IS A SENIOR PET DIFFERENT TO AN ADULT OR PUPPY/KITTEN?

Animal's requirements are different at each stage of life due to changes in their metabolism, ability to ambulate (move) and the health of their internal organs. A senior pet has a slower metabolism, tends to move slower as joints and muscle age and wear, and internal organs may not work as effectively as they would have in their younger years.

HOW TO CARE FOR AGEING PETS

COMFORT Older pets often wish to sleep more so it is important to provide them with a soft and warm bed in the winter. The bed should be away from drafts where breezes may chill them. A coat in winter is another option to provide warmth and comfort. Access to outside with minimum steps is another important point, as arthritis may affect their ability to walk up or down stairs and often older dogs don't have great bladder control therefore more frequent toilet trips may be required.

NUTRITION Senior pet food is greatly important as it is specifically formulated to meet their metabolic requirements and may contain substances that help with joint movement. We recommend Royal Canin "Ageing" and/or Royal Canin Mobility/ Joint care food. We have had great success with the diet both improving and maintaining the weight, coat and movement of our elderly furry friends.



HALF YEARLY HEALTH CHECKS

- Teeth** As an animal ages their teeth decay and wear. A health check with your veterinarian can identify any of these problems and ensure they are attended to early before causing or contributing to any long-term illness such as heart disease, reduced liver function and the inability to eat.
- Arthritis** Health checks can identify if your pet is suffering from arthritis. Many people are unaware but there's actually a wide variety of treatment options for pets that suffer from arthritis.
- Sight/ Hearing** Both of these areas tend to deteriorate with age. A vet check can aid in identifying these issues and advice can be given on how to improve your pets' quality of life by altering their environment to accommodate these changes.
- Heart Check** A vet check includes a cardiac auscultation (listening to your pets' heart with a stethoscope). As dogs and cats age they are more likely to develop heart murmurs and arrhythmias. Your veterinarian will be able to identify these and treatment options can then be worked through.
- Lab Tests** We also recommend that senior pets receive a geriatric blood test and urinalysis. These tests screen your pets' internal organs for signs of age or disease related deterioration. Early detection means earlier treatment and/or management and this will no doubt improve your beloved pets change of a longer and happier life.

This information sheet is not intended as a substitute for a veterinary consultation.

It is recommended that a consultation be arranged with a veterinary practitioner if you have any concerns with your pet's health.