Client information sheet

Senior Pet Care



Nowadays, our pets are living longer than before.

To help them enjoy a good quality of life at this stage, it is important to adapt some aspects of their environment and pay special attention to their health needs, always with the advice of your veterinary team.

Older animals often need more rest, calm and stable routines. The energy, constant play and persistence of a puppy can cause them stress, irritability or tiredness, especially if they are in pain or have an age-related illness. In addition, a young animal can make it harder for the older animal to eat, sleep or rest calmly, and can even increase the risk of minor accidents or injuries. This does not mean they cannot live together. With a gradual introduction, supervision and separate spaces for each animal, living together can be perfectly possible and, in some cases, even beneficial. Our aim should be that the arrival of the new family member does not mean a loss of wellbeing for our older animal.

How to help your pet enjoy a healthy old age

- **Make sure everything your pet needs is always within reach.** Place water, food, toys and bed in easily accessible spots so your pet does not have to move more than necessary. It is also advisable to spread several water bowls around different areas of the house so it can hydrate easily.
- **If you live with a senior cat, adapt its environment to its needs.** Make sure the resting areas, scratching posts, food bowl, water bowl and litter tray are easy to reach. You can add ramps or steps with a non-slip surface so your cat can get to its favourite places effortlessly and with less risk of falls or injuries. The litter tray should have low sides to make getting in and out easier, and with age your cat may prefer a softer litter. Even if it has always toileted outdoors, it is advisable to have a litter tray indoors. If you use a cat flap, check that it is at a suitable height and consider placing non-slip mats or small steps on both sides to make passing through easier.
- **Older dogs may also need some adaptations at home.** Smooth or slippery floors can make their movements harder and increase the risk of falls. Placing non-slip rugs or carpets in walkways will give them better support and allow them to move around the home with greater safety and comfort.

Feeding your pet

- **The nutritional needs of pets change with age.** These vary depending on factors such as species, breed or size, so your veterinary team can recommend the most suitable diet for this stage of its life.
- **Pay attention to its eating and drinking habits.** Keep track of how much your pet eats and drinks and talk to your veterinary team if you notice changes in appetite, water intake, weight or toileting habits, as they could be a sign of a health problem.
- **Older cats may lose their appetite or lose weight.** This can be due to different illnesses, but also to a decline in the sense of smell or taste, or to changes in how the digestive system works. If you notice any of these signs, do not hesitate to talk to your veterinary team.
- **Make it easy for senior cats to reach their food.** Make sure they can easily reach the food bowl and offer food regularly to encourage adequate intake.
- **Keep older dogs active at mealtimes too.** If they are still mobile, interactive toys or food-dispensing devices can help stimulate their mind, keep them entertained and encourage more active behaviour.

- **Adapt the height of food and water bowls.** Slightly raising food and water bowls can make your pet eat and drink more comfortably, so it does not have to bend down too far.

The needs of pets change with age

Exercise and mental stimulation remain essential. Older dogs need to stay active to keep a healthy weight and a good quality of life. It is better to go for shorter, more frequent walks, keeping a constant routine, than to alternate very long walks with days of little activity. If you have more time at the weekend, instead of lengthening the route, walk at a calmer pace and let your dog sniff calmly, as this is an excellent form of mental stimulation. In addition, interactive toys, puzzle games and food-dispensing devices are a good alternative to keep their mind active without demanding great physical effort.

- **Protect them from the cold.** During the colder months, a coat can help your dog stay warm and dry on walks.
- **Make movement easier.** If you notice your dog is stiff or has difficulty getting into the car, going in or out of the house or using stairs, installing a ramp or a step can make these activities much more comfortable and safe.
- **Keep up a brushing routine.** Regular brushing not only strengthens the bond with your pet, it also lets you check its body and spot lumps, sensitive areas or any other abnormality. In older cats it is especially important, as with age they may lose the ability to groom properly, which encourages knots and tangles. Brushing helps remove dead hair and keep the coat clean and in good condition.
- **Pay attention to changes in urination.** Some senior cats may start to urinate more often because of different health problems. If you notice this change, talk to your veterinary team so they can assess the cause.

Health and wellbeing

- **Keep your pet active and at a healthy weight.** As in people, staying fit will help it keep its vitality and age in a healthier, more active way.
- **Adapt the environment to their new needs.** With age, it is normal for pets' eyesight and hearing to decline. They may also lose agility and feel more insecure or disoriented, especially in unfamiliar places. Whenever possible, avoid making major changes at home, such as moving furniture, as they may use it as landmarks to find their way around more easily.
- **Do not neglect their dental health.** Regular dental check-ups are essential, as older pets, especially cats, can develop painful dental disease without showing obvious signs.
- **Pay attention to the condition of their nails.** As their activity level drops, older pets wear their nails down less and may need them trimmed more often. In cats, the nails can thicken or even grow into the paw pads if they can no longer retract them properly. Your veterinary team can help you with this care.

If you notice any change, talk to your veterinary team. Changes in behaviour are not always a normal consequence of ageing; in many cases they can be the first sign of a health problem. Regular check-ups are the best way to detect these changes in time and look after your pet's wellbeing.