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Health Checks for "Senior" Pets

Is your pet a senior citizen? A dog is considered to be a senior citizen at around 7-10 years old (depending on their size – bigger dogs age more quickly), while a cat is considered old at around 9 years of age. If your pet has reached this age, it's important to pay very close attention to their health and well-being. Are they losing weight, have they gone off their food, are they urinating more than usual?

Older animals are more prone to certain diseases such as arthritis and cancer. Your vet will be able to give your pet a thorough physical examination to pick up any lumps and bumps that may be cancerous or any joints that may be arthritic. The vet can also inspect your pet's mouth to identify dental disease, a painful condition that is common in older animals.

There are a number of tests which your vet can perform that allow us to detect diseases early and start appropriate management or treatment. A simple urine test can help to detect diabetes and kidney disease, and a blood test can help to identify liver disease. Kidney disease is common in older cats, and these cats should then be fed a special diet to help keep their kidneys working.

Your vet will be able to give you advice about other important things which you need to know about your older pet. Older pets often begin to drink less, increasing their risk of dehydration, so could be fed wet food instead of dry food. Some older pets begin to show signs reminiscent of senility in humans. Older animals also have a less robust immune system compared to their younger counterparts, so it's vitally important that they continue to visit the vet for their vaccinations and deworming treatments.

Pets Get Arthritis Too!

Arthritis is probably the most common condition that we see in older animals. While we have all been enjoying the unusually warm autumn weather, the cold weather is definitely coming. There are some simple measures you can take at home in order to ensure your elderly companion stays comfortable over winter. Ensure your pet has soft, warm and draught-free bedding and consider the need for a warm 'doggy jacket'. Be aware that excess weight can contribute to the development of arthritis, and consider a weight loss program

Some of the signs of arthritis include:

- General stiffness or limping
- Difficulty getting up after resting
- Difficulty jumping into the car or onto furniture
- Reluctance to play
- Toileting inside
- Licking at legs
- Change in behaviour- e.g. no longer likes being patted, or snaps when touched

Arthritis management can drastically improve the quality of your pet's life and may include any or all of the following:

- Pain Relief** in the form of anti-inflammatories
- Slowing Disease Progression** using Synovan® injections
- Maintaining Healthy Joints** by using supplements that promote cartilage
- Lifestyle Changes** especially weight control and regular gentle exercise

During June and July, Cowra Veterinary Centre is offering senior pet check-ups for half the regular price of a consultation (excluding medication or laboratory tests). If you have any questions or to make an appointment for a senior pet check-up, please contact Cowra Veterinary Centre. We also encourage you to bring your pet in for a free weight check. Together we can help your furry friend age gracefully!

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