

Caring for our Older Patients

Just like people, aging dogs and cats need special medical care to keep them feeling as youthful as possible. Our staff not only wants your pet to be with you as long as possible, we want you both to continue to lead an active and comfortable life together. Preventative care and early diagnosis is especially important in older patients, and catching both common and uncommon medical issues can make all the difference in providing more options to keep your family member healthy and happy. Regular physical examinations and lab work are the best way to help us do this.

Preventative care is good for both of you

Many problems are considered "just part of aging", but most common age related problems can be controlled so they do not become more serious issues. *Leaking urine, stiffness/lameness, eye/ear issues, dental disease, etc.*, can all have their symptoms lessened in order to keep your pet healthier and a better companion for your family. Also by detecting problems early, you can greatly lessen the expense of treatment since many more options are available. Once a medical problem becomes serious, we are very limited in options for care.

Regular exams can allow us to find potentially serious growths early while there is still a greater chance for successful removal. *Many internal growths go unnoticed by owners until large enough to present a real threat to their pet's health.* By palpating the body during a routine exam, many growths can be detected early. Palpation during exam can also uncover areas becoming stiff and painful before symptoms of real pain, such as limping, present themselves.

Slight loss or gain of weight can tell us a lot about a pet's general condition. When compared to the weight of humans, a pound or two in a pet can be a large percentage of their overall body weight. *Thyroid conditions, Diabetes, and even tumors* can be detected early by change in weight that may go unnoticed to the naked eye until the change is dramatic.

Labwork performed during these routine exams- such as *stool tests, blood work, and urine tests*- allows for the early detection of common geriatric medical issues such as early kidney, heart and liver failure. These conditions can be controlled for the most part by diet and medication if caught early enough. If left undetected until physical symptoms arise, these conditions will become life threatening much sooner. *With early detection, even these serious conditions can be controlled and your pet can live a good life for years when given adequate care.*

When is a pet elderly?

There is great variation based on breed and size in determining when a pet is geriatric. For the most part, cats and smaller dogs are considered geriatric around the age of ten. Larger dogs can start having age related problems as early as six or seven years old. Dr. Thies will help you determine when your pet should start being viewed as elderly. At that time he will advise you as to any changes in care he recommends regarding medical treatments, diet, etc.

Preventative/Diagnostic recommendations

For ideal care, your geriatric pet should have a ***physical exam and basic lab work performed every 6 months.*** You should plan on bringing in both a stool and a urine sample to your visits, and a blood panel should be performed. The stool test should be collected within 12 hours of your visit and kept in an air tight refrigerated container. Urine samples can be a bit trickier to obtain at home and we can try to collect one during your visit if you are unable to get one. For dogs sometimes sliding a low sided container such as a pie tin under them while they are urinating will work. For cats you can use a small amount of shredded paper in their box instead of litter. Based on the findings at your visits, Dr Thies will let you know if more regular visits or further/more advanced diagnostics are recommended. Exams are recommended yearly at a minimum.

We value your trust in us

Whether your elderly pet has been with you his/her whole life or they were lucky enough to find you as an adult, we know you want the best care for them. We are glad you have chosen us for their care and hope you will allow us to do everything possible to keep them healthy, happy and the best companion they can be.