

Special Considerations for Senior Cats

One of the most difficult aspects of pet ownership is knowing our pets will not live forever. A cat's aging process is different than ours. Genetics, size and weight play a huge factor in the expected longevity of your pet.

What does it mean when we say a cat is a "senior"? Basically, "senior" cats are experiencing internal and external age related changes.

What does it mean when we say a cat is "geriatric"? This simply means your cat has reached or exceeded their life expectancy.

How can we help our pets live longer and happier lives?

1. Bi-annual senior wellness exams. By scheduling examinations at least twice yearly, your veterinarian has the opportunity to notice changes and evaluate medical trends in your pet sooner. This allows us to start early intervention into any medical problems and leads to a better overall quality of life.
2. Yearly blood and urine testing. Detection of common diseases like kidney disease, thyroid disease and diabetes is first done via blood test. Early detection equals early treatment which can help prolong your pet's life while improving its quality.
3. Older pets tend not to groom themselves as well and require more frequent brushing and nail trimming.
4. Senior formulated diets. Caloric and nutrient needs change as pets age and Senior diets are a good idea for many pets. Discuss suggestions and available options with your veterinarian.
5. Monitor for foul breath odor or inability to eat dry kibble. Dental disease is a frequent and painful disease seen in senior cats.
6. Keep your own records of noticeable changes. Record your pet's weight monthly. Measure food and water consumption. Take pictures of any lumps or masses on your pet and observe size, shape, or color changes of these masses.
7. Watch for signs of arthritis or joint disease. Is your cat reluctant to go upstairs? Can they no longer jump up on furniture? Your veterinarian may suggest medications, supplements, acupuncture, and/ or laser therapy to keep them comfortable. They can also recommend any environmental modifications.
8. Look for any sleep changes or times of disorientation or confusion. Dementia can affect pets.

There are many things we can do to help our pets age gracefully and limit discomfort. The staff of Longwood Veterinary Center are here to make sure you have all the knowledge and tools to provide your pet with the care and support they need.

