



# Your Senior Cat

## Old age is not a disease

As a result of advances in Veterinary Medicine, more knowledgeable care and improved nutrition, cats are living much longer, healthier lives. But just as for humans, the passage of time has its effects, and you may begin to notice that your once-frisky pet seems to have slowed down a bit. Being aware of the natural changes that can occur as your cat reaches his or her golden years, as well as what you can do to help keep your pet as healthy, active and comfortable as possible, can ensure that you both enjoy this final stage in your cat's life to the fullest.

## Keep your vet informed

You should tell your veterinarian about any noticeable changes in your cat's physical condition or behaviour. A problem that you may assume is simply related to your pet's age may be actually be a result of a medical condition. For example, your cat's lack of interest in exercise or play may not stem from the normal decreased energy that comes with age, but from arthritis. Regular, semi-annual checkups can thus help your veterinarian work out a suitable preventative health program for your pet and catch any problems early to provide effective treatment. Working together, you can both ensure that your cat's senior years will be healthy and happy ones.

## How will I know my cat is getting "old"?

As cats move into the geriatric phase of their lives, they experience gradual changes that are remarkably like those of an aging human: hair may turn grey, their bodies are not as limber and reflexes are not as sharp as they once were, hearing, eyesight and the sense of smell may deteriorate and energy levels seem to diminish. In fact, the first signs of aging is often a general decrease in activity, combined with a tendency to sleep longer and more soundly. Such signs may manifest themselves anywhere between ages 7 and 11. Again as with humans, the aging process will vary with each individual pet. Your Veterinarian will be able to judge when it's time to consider your pet a "senior".



## Physicals now come twice a year

As your cat ages, regular checkups become more important than ever. In fact, at this stage of your pet's life, it is recommended that he or she receive a thorough exam every 6 months, as adult dogs can age as much as 4 years (in human terms) within the period of 1 calendar year. Besides the usual complete physical examination, your Veterinarian may conduct a blood screen as well as urine testing.

## Put a healthy diet on the menu

As your pet ages, your cat's nutritional needs may also change. You may find that, although your pet is eating less, they still put on weight. This could be due to a slow metabolism or decreased energy level. Excess weight can aggravate many medical conditions, including the heart, skin, respiratory, and joints problems. To better help your companion, ask your Veterinarian for advice about your pet's individual nutritional needs.



Feline

Canine

Weight (lb)

Age	Weight (lb)				
	0-20	0-20	20-50	50-90	>90
1	7	7	7	8	9
2	13	13	14	16	18
3	20	20	21	24	26
4	26	26	27	31	34
5	33	33	34	38	41
6	40	40	42	45	49
7	44	44	47	50	56
8	48	48	51	55	64
9	52	52	56	61	71
10	56	56	60	66	78
11	60	60	65	72	86
12	64	64	69	77	93
13	68	68	74	82	101
14	72	72	78	88	108
15	76	76	83	93	115
16	80	80	87	99	123
17	84	84	92	104	131
18	88	88	96	109	139
19	92	92	101	115	-
20	96	96	105	120	-

Table courtesy of Fred L. Metzger, DVM, DABVP

COLOUR KEY

■ adult

■ senior

■ geriatric



### Top 10 health tips for senior pets

1. Take your cat to his or her Veterinarian for twice a year check ups
2. Become informed about conditions and diseases common to senior pets, be on the lookout for these symptoms and should they arise, inform your Veterinarian
3. Feed your cat the best quality food possible
4. Don't overfeed – obesity causes many health problems
5. Make sure your cat receives adequate exercise to preserve muscle tone, and bone and joint strength and fight obesity
6. Look after your cat's dental health. Brush their teeth daily and have the cleaned professionally by your Veterinarian
7. Have your Veterinarian do a risk assessment to determine an appropriate vaccination protocol for your cat
8. Do your utmost to control fleas and make sure your cat's environment is clean (bed, play area etc.)
9. Check your cats nails weekly and trim them as often as necessary, as senior cats may not use their scratching posts as often as they used to
10. Give your cat lots of love and attention. Do all that you can to keep them interested, happy, active and comfortable





# The Important of a Wellness Profile

Dogs and Cats often “hide” clinical signs of underlying disease and may not show signs of illness until the disease or disorder is well advanced.

Testing blood and urine allows us to:

- Detect disease early
- Adjust treatment where there is underlying organ dysfunction

*What tests may be included in a “wellness” profile?*

Test	Some Disease Implications for Senior Pets	
<b>Complete Blood Count (CBC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underlying infection</li> <li>• Mild, unresponsive anemia due to chronic disease (+/- clinical signs)</li> <li>• Immune-mediated disease (spherocytes and a responsive anemia)</li> <li>• Cancer (abnormal lymphocyte count and morphology)</li> </ul>	
<b>Albumin</b>	<p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liver failure (70-80% live function loss before significant albumin drop)</li> <li>• Protein losing nephropathy (e.g. nephrotic syndrome)</li> <li>• Posing losing enteropathy (e.g. lymphangiectasia – will produce low albumin and globulin)</li> </ul>	
<b>Alanine Aminotransferase (ALT)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liver disease – liver cells leak ALT when damaged. Persistent levels over 2-2.5 x normal are cause for further investigation and may indicate ongoing damage (please note: ALT values may be normal in end-stage liver disease)</li> <li>• “Reactive” hepatopathy due to inflammatory bowel disease, hyperadrenocorticism, right-sided heart failure, diabetes mellitus.</li> </ul>	
<b>Serum Alkaline Phosphates (SAP)</b>	<p><b>Increased in dogs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steroids (exogenous and endogenous)</li> <li>• Anti-convulsants</li> <li>• Idiopathic vacuolar hepatopathy</li> <li>• Nodular hyperplasia</li> </ul>	<p><b>Increased in cats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyperthyroidism</li> <li>• Liver disease (cholangiohepatitis, fatty liver)</li> </ul>
<b>Blood Urea Nitrogen (BUN)</b>	<p><b>Increased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renal dysfunction (75% or more renal damage)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Decreased:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End-stage liver disease (cirrhosis and acquired portovascular shunts)</li> <li>• Starvation or protein restricted diets</li> </ul>

## Serum Creatinine

### Increased:

- Renal failure (with inappropriate urine specific gravity)

### Decreased:

- Older pets (especially cats) with muscle wasting
- Idiopathic (cats)

## Serum Calcium (Ca)

### Increased:

- Hyperparathyroidism
- Some cancers (lymphoma, perianal adenocarcinoma)
- Kidney disease

## Serum Phosphorus (P)

### Increased:

- Renal disease
- Hyperthyroidism (cats)

## Serum Potassium (K)

### Increased:

- Addison's disease

### Decreased:

- Polyuria and polydipsia
- Inappetence and gastrointestinal upset (vomiting and diarrhea)

## Glucose

### Increased:

- Diabetes Mellitus
- Stress (particularly in cats)
- Hyperadrenocorticism (dogs)

### Decreased:

- Insulin-producing tumors
- Liver dysfunction
- Hypoadrenocorticism

## Urinalysis

(Specific Gravity, Dipstick, Sediment)

### A first morning urine sample is recommended

- Normal Specific Gravity
  - Cat >1.040
  - Dog >1.025
- Inappropriate urine concentration may indicate:
  - Renal disease
  - Hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism
  - Hyperadrenocorticism
  - Hypercalcemia
  - Diabetes Mellitus
- Proteinuria (if ruled out inflammatory disease)
  - Microalbuminuria (may be early indicator of renal disease)
  - Protein losing nephropathy

