

FELINE GERIATRICS

Most pet owners fail to realize that pets age more rapidly than humans, and the gradual onset of old age problems in a previously healthy cat may be both unexpected and distressing. The average life span of a cat should be 12-14 years. The oldest cat on record lived to be 36.

As cats age, stress on vital organs, such as the heart, liver, and kidneys, are more likely to become serious. Vitamin requirements generally increase, and nutritional needs differ greatly from younger cats. Sources of chronic infections, such as tooth and gum disease, can adversely affect internal organs and contribute to failing health. Aging also increases the risk of arthritis, disc disease, and other skeletal problems. Many of these problems are readily detectable and controllable if diagnosed early.

Major Problems in Older Cats Include:

1. Constipation due to decreased blood supply to the colon.
2. Rear leg weakness due to loss of muscle tissue which does not regenerate.
3. Anemia due to leukemia, kidney disease, or improper nutrition.
4. Bad Breath/Sore Mouth due to tartar buildup on the teeth.
5. Fading memory (loss of habits) due to poor blood supply and oxygen to the brain.
6. Poor hair coat due to loss of sex hormones or vitamin/mineral deficiencies.

Recommendations for Health Care of Cats Over 5 Years of Age:

1. Feed HIGH QUALITY balanced DIET.
 - (a) Cats eat on a 3-4 day cycle--don't worry if it does not eat every day.
 - (b) Cats require a much higher protein level than dogs.
(NO dog food.)
2. Maintain teeth and gums.
Check twice a year for need of Dental Hygiene. Use Pet Dentifrice daily as directed.
3. Annual Vaccinations for Feline Distemper, Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Rabies, Feline Infectious Peritonitis and Leukemia.
4. Annual Fecal Examination for internal parasites.
5. Annual Blood Counts for the presence of anemia.
6. Blood Profiles checking liver and kidney function each year.
7. Encourage Water Consumption--provide clean, fresh water daily.
8. Daily Brushing and Bathe every 10-14 days to remove chemicals on the hair picked up off carpets, furniture, etc. These chemicals are often thought to be the reason cats develop liver failure since they are often ingested when the cat "cleans" itself.
9. Vitamin A, B, C, D, E, and Zinc Supplements.