



Healthy Lives for Aging Pets

by Lori D. Leonard, DVM, VetMFHom

As our animal companions age, their various body systems may not function as well as when they were younger, and they can benefit from an informed owner seeking holistic options. It has been said, "Age is not a disease." So just because a cat is 16 or a dog is 14, doesn't mean they can't feel well. There are options for contributing to their well-being.

At least once a year, have your pet's blood values checked. Problems can be identified early based on these tests, along with a thorough physical examination. With early identification of health challenges, supportive therapies can be instituted that will enhance the patient's quality of life. Most of our companion animals do not exhibit overt signs of pain and discomfort, and by the time many owners are aware of a problem, it can be quite advanced.

Holistic supplements are used to support a pet's digestion, liver, heart, eyes, kidneys, brain, joints (legs and spine) and immune system. Ask your vet for supplements that are made for animals. Depending on the expertise of your holistic vet, Chinese or Western herbs may be offered. Physical therapy can be very useful, along with daily exercises to be done at home. Flower essences and homeopathy are valuable additions to your pet's regimen.

Intellectual stimulation may be even more important to support our pets when they are older than when they are younger. Keep your pets occupied with games and activities, interaction with people and even learning new tricks! It can be surmised that this approach may help to rewire the brains of our pets and therefore would be useful as they cope with the aging process. A good, high-quality, species-appropriate diet and regular exercise are important for pets of all ages.

By being informed and following some simple guidelines, you can help your pets age gracefully and enjoy high-quality life to the fullest.

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