

Health

- It should be remembered that old age is not a disease, it is rather a series of changes the body undergoes
- A geriatric animal may be deaf & blind & unable to run long distances, but still be very healthy
- The diseases which occur in old age are only more common in geriatrics because the body is less able to fight disease

Preventative Health Care

There is nothing out there (as yet) that can reverse the aging process, but there are certain measures that can be taken to ensure the best possible health of your pet.

- Regular vaccination & worming treatments
- Adequate exercise
- Reduced stress in daily life of older pets
- Comfortable, warm bedding
- Good nutrition throughout life—a balanced diet for your animal's life stage



Degenerative Process

- This is basically the tissues of the body changing in a way, where the body is unable to function as it normally would
- These changes are normally irreversible, & are progressive. (They will continue to get worse overtime)
- These changes not only occur within the body but also the mind, the degree of change can vary hugely with each animal.

Mental Stimulation

- Take your dog out with you, even if its just to get the mail, it gives them time with you
- Increase the time your pet has to interact with you, it doesn't need to be long, shorter times, more often may keep your pet happier than ever
- Vary your pets day, take them out in the car with you, change the scenery for them, they will love you for it
- Boredom may result in destructive behaviour, in appetite & excessive barking in dogs

Nutrition

Your animal as it gets older, tends to do less exercise & may become over weight. Here are a few hints to help you out

- He/She often needs less calories so it is a good idea to look at a senior commercial diet which are totally balanced & complete for your pets life stage.
- Change the diet gradually to help reduce any stomach upsets occurring.
- Specialist diets are also available for those animals with special dietary needs.

Exercise

You will notice a change in how much your animal is now able to cope with comfortably, this doesn't mean to stop exercise altogether!!! It can be beneficial for the geriatric animal.

- Frequent exercise will help keep stiff joints moving & enables toileting opportunities
- Little and often is recommended—elderly dogs enjoy 'sniffing about'
- Exercise helps control obesity
- It encourages blood flow to all parts of the body
- It helps to prevent boredom.
- Swimming is great exercise it is low impact & can be fun for those who love the water



Grooming

All animals enjoy feeling clean. Grooming your pet gives you & your pet contact time, love & affection.

- Older animals are less likely to groom themselves as much as they once did, so therefore need to be groomed more regularly
- The animal feels much better—Humans don't like to feel dirty—neither do animals especially cats
- This also gives you time to give your pet a good check over, their coat, eyes, ears, mouth for any changes which may need addressing

Administration of Medication

- Put the tablet in some food—he/she may not even realize its there
- Give a treat after each tableting—it makes you both feel a lot better
- There are tableting tools ranging from treats to pill poppers, ask staff for more information



Euthanasia

This is a very difficult decision to make but the vet can discuss the options and help you to come to the correct decision for you and your pet.

Once the decision has been made to euthanase there are several options you can take

- You may wish to be present at the time or you may wish to drop your pet off
- You may wish to take your animal home for burial or to leave them at the clinic
- Or allow the clinic to arrange a cremation service to take place

There are some options for cremation which can include receiving the ashes back in a beautiful rimu box, there are also other urns and engraving options available.

Even though this is a very sad time & sometimes difficult to handle, we should remember that this is sometimes the greatest gift we can give to our pets—freedom from suffering, stress & pain.

Grief Counselling

This will vary hugely from person to person, the process that usually occurs is

- Shock & denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Length of grief & sequence of this process is very variable & all completely normal & OK, we are all so very different. Some other help may also be necessary e.g. counselling. The death of a pet can be very stressful & the inability to cope is not wrong or embarrassing.

SENIOR PET CARE

