

SENIOR PETS

How your pet's needs
change as they age.



Early detection is the key to helping
your pet enjoy their Golden Years.



www.tampabayvets.net

As our pets age there are changes in just about every system in their bodies. The pumping function of the heart becomes less efficient; the liver and kidneys decrease in weight and their ability to filter toxins decreases; the thyroid and adrenal glands may decrease or increase the amount of hormone that they produce; there is a decrease in joint cartilage and muscle mass; dental disease is more common in older patients; and even the nervous system is affected as there is a decrease in blood flow to the brain and a decrease in brain function.

The key to managing these changes in our pets is early detection. Much like our own aging process, we can't stop the changes from happening, but we may be able to slow them down and decrease their impact on our pet's quality of life. The actual age at which our pets are considered senior will vary with weight; however 7 years old is an average age when we start to watch closely for aging related changes.

Owners are the first line of defense in the identification of aging changes. It is important to make note of changes in water consumption, elimination habits, appetite, lumps and bumps, mobility, and other behaviors. These seemingly minor changes can be the first indicators of more significant underlying problems.



Routine Comprehensive Physical Exams (every 6 months) will also help in the early detection of organ function changes. The veterinary team will check body weight, temperature, joint range of motion, evaluate eyes and ears, palpate the organs in the abdomen, evaluate the oral cavity, check the skin for lumps and bumps, and listen to the heart and lungs as part of the examination process.

The results of the physical exam will dictate further actions needed. Bloodwork and urinalysis are routinely performed to assess early changes in organ function. Radiographs (xrays) may be advised if changes are noted in heart rate or rhythm or if a murmur (abnormal heart sound) is heard. Just like in humans, blood pressure is routinely measured in our pets to help identify various disease processes.

Your veterinary team will assemble information from your observations at home, physical exam findings, laboratory results and other testing performed to put together a plan to help your pet make the most of their senior years. This plan will include recommendations for your pet's diet, exercise, examination schedule, lab testing needs, vaccination needs, parasite control, dental care, and any medications that may be indicated.

Senior pets, especially in the Sunshine State, deserve a long and fun life. With a team approach and early detection of problems, we can help your pet enjoy their Golden Years!

Call us to discuss an early-detection and wellness plan for your pet today.