

# OLDER PETS

Is your animal getting 'old'? Are walks and exercise an effort with them panting a lot and trailing behind? Are they reluctant to play? Are they having more 'off' days where they can't be bothered to move from their bed? Are they eating or drinking more? Are they as happy as they once were? Do you feel their quality of life is declining? It may not just be due to old age.

When animals begin to feel 'old' it is often because they have a real medical problem. Most old animals have important organs which aren't working as well as they used to. If the kidneys or liver are not working properly, poisons build up in their system, making them feel permanently tired and unwell. If the heart isn't working properly, it cannot pump enough blood around the body to allow them to do all the things they would normally enjoy, such as exercise and play. Not playing and losing enthusiasm for exercise

can also be a sign of arthritis. Eating and drinking more than usual can indicate diabetes, liver, kidney or thyroid problems. All of these problems make later life much less enjoyable for your pet.

Geriatric medicine for animals has improved dramatically in recent years, but because we cannot for example perform liver transplants or dialyse animals with kidney failure, we rely on early diagnosis to successfully treat these conditions. If you suspect your animals are slowing down, it is a good idea to get them checked

by a vet. We will examine them thoroughly and may request to perform a blood test to check on organ function. Although not all conditions can be detected before they cause major problems, regular check-ups represent your pets best chance of receiving treatment early for age-related problems at a stage when we can treat them very successfully. Even if we find nothing at these regular checks, you have the reassurance that your pet is healthy and that you have done the best you can to keep them that way.

