

 **Village Animal Clinic** 

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## Senior Wellness for Cats



Recommendations for Senior Pets  
(age 10 years and above)

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Once cats enter their senior years (when they reach 10 years of age), twice yearly wellness examinations and lab work are recommended. Cats age more quickly during their senior years, and the risk of developing chronic and serious diseases also increases. Seeing your pet more frequently will help us to detect changes in their condition in earlier stages, increasing our ability to treat or control these conditions effectively.

***EVERY 6 MONTHS WE RECOMMEND:***

- Comprehensive Medical History
- Complete Physical Exam
- Complete Blood Count
- Blood Chemistry Profile
- Thyroid Profile
- Urinalysis
- Intestinal Parasite Screening
- Blood Pressure



***DIET***

Dietary recommendations will vary based on body condition and any disease present. A good diet is palatable, provides complete and balanced nutrition, and helps maintain an ideal body weight. We recommended feeding 3-4 smaller meals per day. Increased water intake is important as older cats are prone to conditions that predispose to dehydration and subsequent constipation. Water intake can be increased by feeding canned food, adding water to the dry food, and using multiple water dishes and/or water fountains. Changes in diet should be made gradually (over a period of a week or longer).

Feeding more odorous canned food can be helpful with appetite decline. Many senior cats have a decreased sense of smell, which directly influences their appetite.

We carry multiple different types of vitamins that can be added to your pet's diet if needed:

- **Multivitamins:** we carry three different forms - chewable treats, powder to add to food, and capsules
- **Standard Process Supplements:** this brand formulates supplements made from whole foods and other ingredients to support your pet's individual nutritional needs. Their organic ingredients are grown on a certified organic farm in Wisconsin, which allows them to control the quality of the ingredients. There are multiple formulations including: Whole Body Support, Renal Support, Ligaplex I and II (ligament health), Adrenal Support, Immune Support, Liver Support, etc.

## OSTEOARTHRITIS

Arthritis is inflammation of the joint, which can be caused by degeneration of cartilage within the joint due to trauma, or wear and tear in athletic animals, obese pets, and/or elderly patients. In a healthy joint, cartilage acts as a cushion or “shock absorber” to protect bones and prevent them from rubbing on each other during normal movement. As this cartilage becomes damaged and begins to wear away, the inflammatory process begins. This process can be a vicious cycle as the inflammation causes further damage and degeneration of the cartilage. Once you notice your pet showing signs of pain and discomfort in the affected joints, the damage has already begun.

- **COSEQUIN:** This supplement contains glucosamine/chondroitin to help support the health of your pet’s joints. This is one of the only brands proven to help maintain joint health and prevent cartilage breakdown. In one study, over 80% of animals on Cosequin improved significantly in their mobility, level of comfort, and attitude. Cosequin helps maintain the cartilage structure and inhibits the enzymes that break down cartilage.
- **DASUQUIN ADVANCED:** This supplement is made by the same company as Cosequin and is similar in that it also contains glucosamine/chondroitin, but also has the added benefits of omega-3 and natural anti-inflammatories to help support joint cartilage, inhibit cartilage breakdown, and provide antioxidant support.
- **FISH OIL/OMEGAS:** Omega fatty acids help relieve inflammation in the joints. They are very safe and well-tolerated. Omega fatty acids are also of benefit for the skin, heart, brain, etc.
- **DO NOT USE:** Over the counter pain medications such as Tylenol (acetaminophen), Advil (ibuprofen), or aspirin. These are toxic for cats and should not be used.
- **PAIN MEDICATIONS (gabapentin, buprenorphine, etc.):** Pain medications can be used daily or as needed if supplements are not enough to keep your pet comfortable.
- **PRESCRIPTION DIETS (Hill’s J/D, Royal Canin Joint and Mobility Support, Purina Joint Mobility):** These diets help preserve joint cartilage, maintain a healthy weight, and support a healthy immune system. They also contain Omega-3 fatty acids, glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate, L-carnitine, and antioxidants.



*Using pet stairs/steps, physical therapy, massage, acupuncture, and laser therapy can be helpful options for your pet as well!*

## **DENTAL DISEASE**

Periodontal disease is the most common health problem in dogs and cats. Periodontal disease starts when plaque (bacteria and food) coats the teeth. Plaque hardens (calcifies) into tartar, a brown layer on the teeth. Tartar irritates the gums, creating an environment where bacteria thrive. As the disease progresses, gums become tender, red, and swollen (also known as gingivitis), and the bacteria continue to multiply. This leads to an infection causing bad breath, loose painful teeth, and eventually loss of teeth. As the oral infection progresses, bacteria can be absorbed into the bloodstream and carried to other organs. "Bad teeth" can cause infections in the heart valves (endocarditis), kidneys, and/or liver. This is most debilitating in older pets and those with chronic conditions such as heart and kidney disease.

*Treatment for gingivitis includes a professional dental cleaning and plan for prevention. If not treated promptly and properly, this condition will progress to advanced stages of gum disease.*



**Cat's Teeth Before Dental Cleaning**



**Cat's Teeth After Dental Cleaning**

Advanced stages of gum disease can lead to:

- Tooth loss
- Gingivitis (gum inflammation)
- Gingival recession
- Tooth root abscess
- Pain and discomfort
- Spread of infection to other organs (heart, liver, kidneys)

We have multiple dental products to help keep your pet's mouth clean and healthy:

- Dental chews - CET chews
- Toothpaste and toothbrushes
- Hills T/D diet (a dental health food that can be used as an everyday diet or as a treat)
- Oratene water additive, this helps decrease plaque formation



## ***COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION SYNDROME (DEMENTIA)***

This is a condition related to aging of the brain, which ultimately leads to decreased awareness, recognition, memory, and learned behavior. Although the initial symptoms of the disorder are mild, they can worsen over time. Many cats experience disorientation, restlessness, anxiety, increased irritability, obsessive behaviors (such as lickin), changes in sleep cycle, lack of self-grooming, etc. Unfortunately, as in humans, this is not something that can be cured but there are options to help keep our senior pets with this condition more comfortable.

### **MEDICATIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS:**

- ANIPRYL (SELEGILINE): This is a prescription medication used to control the signs associated with cognitive dysfunction by prolonging dopamine levels in the brain. The most common side effects are vomiting and diarrhea (which are rare) and restlessness.
- DENAMARIN (SAM-e), OMEGA-3 (FISH OIL): these supplements are antioxidants which help decrease inflammatory by-products in the brain.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT:** Promoting mental stimulation is important for brain health. Examples include brushing your pet daily, massage, exposing them to different smells and sounds, teaching new tricks, playing games (such as hiding treats and toys), and introducing new toys. Additionally, regular exercise, at least 30 minutes every day, is important for whole-body and brain health.



## ***ANXIETY***

It is very common for our senior pets to start developing signs of anxiety. They may start developing separation anxiety, fear of loud noises, and storm phobias. This may or may not be related to cognitive dysfunction/dementia. We have multiple products to help keep anxious pets calm and relaxed.

### **SUPPLEMENTS:**

- FELIWAY: This product mimics a natural facial pheromone that leads to calming. This product is recommended to help reduce scratching and urinating outside the

litterbox. There is also a multicat household diffuser to help reduce tension and conflict between household cats.

- COMPOSURE TREATS: these are treats formulated with ingredients that help dogs remain calm. Patented Colostrum Calming Complex Biopeptide Blend, Thiamine (Vitamin B1), and L-Theanine work together to support balanced behavior and a relaxed state of mind. These ingredients have been shown to help reduce stress and unwanted behavior. Composure chews are clinically shown to work within 30 minutes and last up to 4 hours. The maintenance dose can be doubled or tripled during times of added stress.
- PURINA CALMING CARE: a daily probiotic given over food to help promote calm behavior and relieve anxiety.

#### **DIETS:**

- Royal Canin Calm Diet: this diet helps promote calm behavior, relaxation, and support emotional health. It contains a hydrolyzed milk protein and tryptophan, an amino acid involved in balanced serotonin metabolism.

#### **MEDICATION:**

- There are multiple different anti-anxiety medications that can be given for mild, moderate, and severe anxiety. These medications can be given as needed or daily depending on your pet's needs. We can discuss your pet's behavior and decide which medication is best.

***Overall, we want you and your cat to be happy and comfortable, no matter what age they are. Feel free to contact us anytime if you have questions or concerns with your senior pet. We are always here for you!***

