

Village Animal Clinic

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Senior Wellness for Dogs



Recommendations for Senior Pets (age 8 years and above)

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Once dogs enter their senior years (when they reach eight years of age, earlier in giant breeds), twice yearly wellness examinations and lab work are recommended. Dogs 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

It is recommended to switch your pet to a senior diet around eight years of age. Special nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and glucosamine/chondroitin can help your dog stay active and vibrant. Vitamins E and C, taurine, lutein, and beta-carotenes complement the natural immune defenses of the aged dog when included in their diet. Essential fatty acids in fish oil contribute to a healthy skin and coat, as well as benefit the brain, eyes, joints, and heart.

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

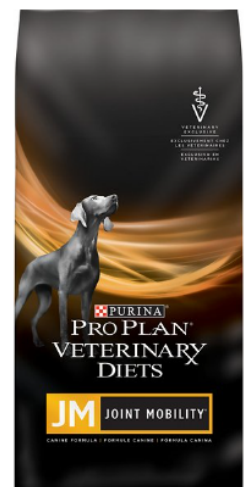
- **Multivitamins:** we carry three different forms - chewable treats, powder to add to food, and capsules
- **Standard Process Supplements:** this brand formulates supplements made from whole foods and other ingredients to support your pet's individual nutritional needs. Their organic ingredients are 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. To help prevent and/or slow the progression of arthritis we recommend a combination of physical activity (walks), weight loss (if indicated), supplements, and anti-inflammatory pain medication.

- **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.
- **ADEQUAN:** This is an injectable medication option that treats arthritis (rather than just the signs associated with arthritis) by inhibiting cartilage loss in the joints. It has been shown to reduce inflammation and pain as well as improve joint lubrication. Adequan is given by injection twice a week for 4 weeks, then monthly to maintain.
- **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.
- **ANTI-INFLAMMATORY MEDICATION (Rimadyl/carprofen, Galliprant, Previcox, etc.):** These medications can be used daily or on an as-needed basis. They improve mobility by reducing joint pain and inflammation. When giving these medications daily, we recommend checking blood work 4-6 weeks after starting the medication and every 6 months thereafter to monitor for changes to the liver and kidneys.
 - **DO NOT USE:** Over the counter pain medications such as Tylenol (acetaminophen), Advil (ibuprofen), or aspirin. These are harmful to your pets and should not be used.
- **PAIN MEDICATIONS (gabapentin, amantadine, etc.):** Pain medications can be used daily or as needed if anti-inflammatory medication and 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.

Swimming, 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.



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 - Oravet 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)

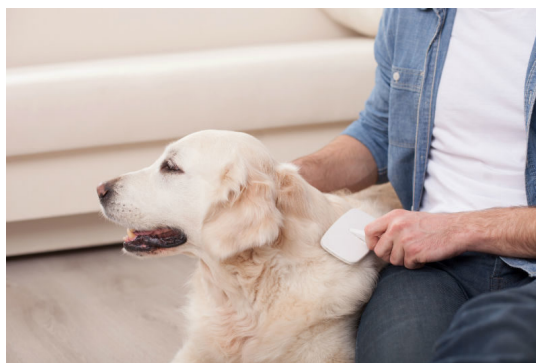
This is a condition related to aging of a dog's brain, which ultimately leads to decreased awareness, recognition, memory, and learned behavior. Although the initial symptoms of the disorder are mild, they can worsen over time. In fact, signs of cognitive dysfunction are found in 50% of dogs over 11 years old and 68% by the ages of 15. Many dogs experience wandering, disorientation, pacing, barking at walls, restlessness, separation anxiety, increased irritability, obsessive behaviors (such as licking), and sleeping unusually deep. 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. It is an effective medication, however it can take several months and dosage changes to see the effects. 70% percent of dogs with cognitive dysfunction respond to therapy after the first month of its use. The most common side effects are vomiting and diarrhea (which are rare) and restlessness.
- MELATONIN AND GABA: These supplements are helpful with senior pets that are having trouble sleeping. Melatonin helps regulate natural circadian rhythm, helping pets to relax and sleep on a regular schedule. GABA is a “downer”, a neurotransmitter that plays a role in decreasing excitability in the brain. Both are available over the counter at health food stores.
- DENAMARIN (SAM-e), OMEGA-3 (FISH OIL), COENZYME Q10, GINKGO & B VITAMINS: these supplements are antioxidants which help decrease inflammatory by-products in the brain.

HILLS B/D FOOD: Hills Brain Diet (B/D) is a prescription diet which is clinically proven to help dogs with cognitive dysfunction by having high levels of omega 3's and other essential nutrients that promote brain health.

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), puzzle games, 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 (such as fireworks), 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:

- ADAPTIL: a synthetic pheromone product that mimics a mother's natural nursing pheromones to help relieve anxiety and calm your pet. Adaptil comes as a collar, spray, or room diffuser you can use in the home.
- 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.
- OVER THE COUNTER SUPPLEMENTS: Melatonin, Alpha-casozepine, L-theanine, Harmonase, aromatherapy (lavender and chamomile) have a calming effect.

DIETS:

- Royal Canin Comfort Care, Hill's B/D: these diets help promote calm behavior, relaxation, and support emotional health. They contain 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.

OTHER OPTIONS:

- THUNDERSHIRT: This is an article of clothing your pet would wear during stressful situations. Like swaddling an infant, these shirts apply gentle, constant pressure to help calm anxiety, fear, and overexcitement in dogs.

Overall, we want you and your dog to be happy and comfortable, no matter their age. Feel free to contact us anytime if you have questions or concerns with your senior pet.

We are always here for you!

