

SENIOR PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

Do you have a healthy senior?

Congratulations! At Healing Paws, we are dedicated to keeping your pet healthy for a long time to come. As your pet enters the senior years, we have some recommendations to make your pet's golden years long and happy.

Bi-annual Examinations

Since your pet was young you have been advised to bring him/her in to the vet for annual checkups. As he/she ages, however, you may wish to consider check ups every 6 months instead.

Our pet's lives are too short for our liking, and you no doubt have heard the old claim that one human year is like 7 dog years, or 5 cat years. If your elderly pet is only seeing the vet once a year, that is like your grandmother going seven years without a visit to the doctor!

Veterinarians who see their patients regularly can pick up on slight changes that indicate the beginnings of serious disease, such as:

- Thyroid imbalance
- Kidney and Liver disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Heart Disease
- Dental Disease

These diseases, if caught early, can be managed and sometimes even cured. If caught late, however, they can often result in the death of the patient. Bi-annual vs annual visits can be that saving difference.



Geriatric Blood Work

If your pet is feeling sick, the reasons for doing bloodwork is obvious – by finding out how the internal organs are functioning and screening for signs of infection, anemia or thyroid problems, we can get to the bottom of your pet's illness.

But what about if your pet seems perfectly healthy?

Blood testing can give your vet a wealth of information about what is going on inside your pet. Dogs and cats tend to hide their pain and act normal even when things aren't fine at all. Even humans often say that they "feel fine" only for their family doctor to discover signs of heart disease, cancer, or diabetes.

Senior Preventive Medicine (continued)

Blood tests tell us how well the internal organs are functioning. They also give us detailed information on how well your pet's immune system is working, and pick up on problems like anemia and thyroid problems. A lot of the diseases common in older pets show up in the blood work long before the pet begins to act or look sick.

Urine tests, called urinalyses, are also a recommended part of senior wellness check up. Kidney problems and diabetes show up in the urine, as do undetected bladder infections.

By catching these problems early, we can try to head them off. If a pet's kidneys are beginning to deteriorate, for example, we can make changes to the pet's lifestyle and diet to reduce further damage and try to delay or even prevent full renal failure.

If your pet's blood work comes back normal, then that is wonderful news, because now we have a snapshot of how your pet's blood looks when he/she is healthy. That way, in the months and years to come, when your pet begins to become sick, we can compare the blood work to when your pet was healthy.

Our idea of "normal" is based on the average dog, and the average cat. When we have blood work on your healthy pet, we are being given detailed knowledge of what YOUR pet's normal looks like.

For example, if your dog's liver enzyme levels were on the low end of "normal" when he/she was healthy, then we might take it more seriously if he/she comes in sick and his/her liver enzymes are on the high end of "normal". Even though it falls within "normal" range, it may not be normal for him/her, and thanks to the blood work you did 6 months ago, the doctor can use that knowledge when making a diagnosis.

WATCH FOR THESE SIGNS IN YOUR SENIOR PETS

Keep track and report them to us immediately, before they become serious.

- Just not acting like himself/herself
- Interacting less often with family
- Responding less often or less enthusiastically
- Showing changes in behaviour/activity level
- Having difficulty climbing stairs
- Having difficulty jumping
- Exhibiting increased stiffness or limping
- Drinking more often
- Changing eating patterns
- Noticeably gaining or losing weight
- Losing house training habits
- Changing sleeping patterns
- Becoming confused or disoriented
- New lumps or bumps
- Scratching more often
- Showing tremors or shaking
- Exhibiting bad breath/red or swollen gums
- Changing hair coat, skin, hair loss, dry flake skin and coat
- Other

