

## Dogs & Old Age

One of the many factors of life that we all have in common is the fact of growing old. We all age every day but this doesn't have to be seen as a bad thing. Research has shown that a dog that is well socialised with many different environments and surroundings when it is young will have a larger brain when it is older. If a dog has a larger brain, then this means that there will also be a greater number of cells, compared to a dog that receives less or little attention. A dog that has been given more training, problem solving and attention will be capable of learning things quicker than a dog that has not received any of these things. Plus a dog that has had all this attention throughout his life will continue to learn in old age.

### What Are The Signs of Old Age?

There are many obvious signs which you will begin to notice as your dog ages, many of which will also happen to ourselves as we age to.



#### Mobility

One of the signs you will notice is that your dog's movements will become much slower to that of his younger days. You may find that he will start to grunt as he lies down on the floor or stands up. You should look out for signs of arthritis, it can occur in any joint but most commonly it is found in the legs and the spine. You will find that your dog will hesitate as he sits down and will have some stiffness. The weather can make it worse, so if you feel that your dog is showing signs of arthritis then you need to book an appointment to see your vet. There are a variety of orthopaedic beds available for dogs now which may provide more comfort and support for dogs as they grow older.



#### Hearing

Most dogs hearing will be reduced and some dogs may even turn completely deaf. If you find that your dog is harder to wake up after he's been asleep or he is startled when somebody walks up behind him, then hearing loss or deafness could be the reason for this. There isn't much that can be done for hearing loss, but it is best to get your dog checked by your vet to exclude any other medical problems, such as an infection, growth or foreign body in the ear. If your dog does experience hearing loss, take care to protect him from hazards, such as cars and kids that he may not hear. Dogs do learn and will adapt well to general commands such as come, stay and sit using hand signals. It is a good idea to train your dog early in life to recognise basic hand signals.



#### Vision

As your dog ages, you may find that your dog's eyes will show a bluish transparent haze in the pupil area. This is a normal effect of ageing, and the medical term for this is lenticular sclerosis. A dog's vision does not appear to be affected. If you notice that your dog's eyes become white and opaque then this could be a sign of cataracts, in this instance it is best to book an appointment with your vet to get them checked



### **Teeth**

As a dog ages, tartar, gum disease, and tooth loss are all potential problems so ensure that you check your dog's teeth regularly.



### **Organs**

A dog's organs, such as digestion, heart and lungs become less efficient. Also some dogs can suffer with incontinence in old age.



### **Appearance**

Most dogs when they age will begin to turn grey around the face and muzzle. Some dogs will turn grey at 2 years of age, but the majority of dogs will start turning grey around 5-6 years of age.

## **Should My Dog Still Be Exercised?**

It doesn't matter what age your dog is, exercise is an important part of any dogs daily routine so you should still continue to take your dog on daily walks (unless there is a physical reason that prevents your dog from being exercised). You should also continue to play games with your dog every day as this will help to engage their mind mentally. Keep in mind though that your dog is not as fit and young as they once were, so training cues may not be carried out as quickly as they used to be.

## **How Can I Ensure That My Dog is Comfortable In Their Senior Years?**



**Comfort:** provide a comfortable clean bed, many pet supply stores now sell orthopaedic beds that aim to ensure comfortable rest for your dog.



**Diet:** provide fresh water daily and a healthy, age-appropriate diet.



**Expectations:** do not expect too much from your senior dog, he may want to run and play Frisbee like in his younger days, but go slow - heat, arthritis, age-related muscle atrophy, and other age-related effects can take their toll.



**Ease distractions:** senior pets can be easily startled by or become fearful of kids, loud noises, and general commotion as they age. Conditions such as arthritis can make the dog fearful of getting hurt with sudden movements of kids or being stepped on.



**Love & Affection:** continue to interact and play with your dog as much as possible, just because they are ageing doesn't mean they are no longer fun to be around.

## **Fancy a Chat?**

**Us too! If you have any questions or would like to speak to us about dogs and old age then give us a call on 07538 032 508 or 07432 153 674. We are always here to help!**