

October Newsletter 2009

Senior Care

More and more pets are living well into their senior years. Dogs & cats over 7 years of age are considered “senior” and some large breed dogs as young as 5 are considered “senior”.

Our goal is to provide your “senior” pets with the best quality of life. Reaching this goal involves regular physical exams, annual or semi-annual blood screening for detection of disease, lifestyle evaluations, regular dental care, arthritis management, specific treatments for managing or treating disease, and hospice care. Currently annual routine blood and urine screening and semi-annual exams are recommended for both dogs and cats over seven years of age.

Below are listed some of the areas we evaluate that are especially pertinent to senior pets.

Routine:

Physical Exams:

Evaluate heart for any irregular rhythms or murmurs

Check skin and lymph nodes for any growths/enlargement

Watch body movement and check joints for potential signs of arthritis

Check teeth for periodontal disease

Check eyes for cataracts, signs of glaucoma

Rectal exam to check for any tumors or enlargement of the prostate (in male dogs)

Blood Screenings:

Check for kidney disease – especially if on certain prescription medications

Check for liver disease – especially if on certain prescription medications

Check for hormone-based diseases (thyroid, adrenal)

Triglyceride and pancreatic disease

Check for anemia

Urine Screening:

Check for low concentration

Check for presence of protein

Check for any glucose

Check for any abnormal cells

Follow-up:

Imaging – Xray and Ultrasound

Blood or urine testing

Cardiac evaluation – Cardiologist referral

Urine bacterial culture

Medication

Surgery

Radioactive iodine referral
Fluid or other IV treatments

We offer and strongly recommend complete annual screenings which include the physical exam, the blood and urine screening, fecal exam for parasites, heartworm screening. We put the whole collection together into a package (Senior Wellness Package) to keep it simpler and to offer the service at a significant discount.

Hospice Care

If your pet develops an untreatable ailment, the best option may be hospice-type care. Hospice care means keeping your pet comfortable and giving them the best quality of life possible.

Hospice services include:

- Multimodal pain control – this may mean medication, dietary supplementation, acupuncture referral
- Dietary adjustments and/or supplementation – this may involve using prescription diets suited for a particular disease (e.g. kidney diets, cancer diets). It may mean using certain supplements, vitamins, herbal or homeopathic remedies
- Other supportive measures are available as well, depending on your pet's illness – these may be medications, may be fluid supplementation at home (e.g. subcutaneous fluids for kidney failure patients)
- Ensuring general comfort, discussing lifestyle adjustments that can make daily habits as easy as possible (e.g. ramps for stairs, extra padded bedding, raising food bowls), exercise adjustments
- Counseling or discussion of quality of life – we do provide a detailed pamphlet for easy at-home reference to help you decide when your pet has reached their final stage

When the final stage is reached, in-clinic (in our private comfort room) or at-home euthanasia services are both available.

Please call or email us with any questions you may have about either senior pet health, senior care or hospice care.