



Canine Senior Health Checks

What is a senior?

It can be very difficult when you are told your dog is considered a senior. Our pets play such big roles in our lives and are such vital parts in our families. Although your pup is still very young at heart, it is important to be aware once they are considered senior. This will help your furbaby live a long and happy life. Small dogs are considered senior from 8 years of age whilst bigger dogs from 6 years. The health status of senior pets can be very variable, and it is important to evaluate them individually. The prevalence of a number of diseases starts to increase and often an early diagnosis can help increase both the quality and duration of their life. Luckily regular health checks with our dedicated veterinary team can help detect age related signs or illness' early. We recommend giving your senior pup a health check every 6 months. Our dogs age faster than humans do. Your senior dog visiting the veterinarian once a year is equivalent to your grandparent visiting the doctor every 7-10 years!

Older pets need more extensive examinations than our younger patients.

What will a senior health check involve?

Your dog will spend the day at our veterinary surgery with our experienced and caring team. During your dogs stay with us, we will perform an extensive health and physical examination and run pathology. We will conduct a blood and urine test using our In House Pathology Equipment and can come

up with a comprehensive plan based on our findings. We will be sure to give your pet lots of TLC and cuddles. You will be rest assured to know your pet is in good hands and you are taking important steps to prolong and improve your pet's life.

When should I take my senior to the vet?

If your pet is unwell, we recommend bringing them in immediately.

Below is a list of common problems that we often see in our senior patients.

Bad breath?

Oral disease is one of the most common health problems in our mature patients. Older dogs may have fewer teeth or sensitive gums, and they suffer more periodontal disease and increased dental calculus. At home you may notice your dog's bad breath, weight loss or difficulty eating. If your dog has dental disease they often will require a dental procedure under anaesthetic where we take x-rays of the roots of their teeth and extract any teeth that cannot be saved. Luckily, long term changes in diet and tooth brushing can help keep them cleaner for longer.

Weight loss or increased thirst could be an indication of Kidney Disease.

Kidney disease is much more common in older dogs. Kidney disease is a progressive disease which is managed, not cured. Early detection and modification of dietary and non-dietary risk factors are the keys to long-term

survival. Early detection often involves regular urine and blood tests plus watching how much your dog drinks and if they are starting to lose weight.

Slow to get out of bed? This could be signs of Musculoskeletal Changes

Older dogs often have decreased lean muscle mass and muscle tone. They are prone to degenerative joint changes such as arthritis. Obesity can exacerbate musculoskeletal disease. If your dog is diagnosed with arthritis, changes in bedding and exercise routine at home can help as well as joint supplements and Pentosan injections.

Digestion/Endocrine Disease

Older dogs may have decreased liver and pancreatic function which can lead to digestive problems. They are also more likely to suffer endocrine diseases such as hypothyroidism, hyperadrenocorticism and diabetes mellitus. You may notice your pup drinking more than they used to, losing weight and having less energy.

Behaviour Changes

Certain behavioural abnormalities may become more evident including disorientation, sleep disruptions, wandering and pacing. Some behaviour changes may be related to vision or hearing loss.

Metabolism Changes

Older dogs tend to lose lean body mass and are less active resulting in a decreased basal metabolic rate. They may be more prone to infections and cancer. Older dogs are less able to metabolise certain drugs and they have a reduced tolerance to heat and cold. Hence they may need changes in diet and extra supplements to help them maintain muscle mass and keep them healthy.

Have you noticed skin changes and skin lumps?

Skin changes include loss of elasticity, flaky coat, and brittle nails. Hair follicles may die leading to bald patches, while hairs lose their pigment and go grey. Older dogs also tend to have more skin lumps that may or may not

need to be removed. This is able to be discussed with one of our veterinarians at your next appointment.

Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiac output can decrease in older dogs, decreasing the heart's efficiency. This in turn may cause damages to other organs. Heart murmurs can often be detected in older pets, and can be caused by thickening and damage to the heart valves. If left untreated may increase the risk of premature heart failure. Coughing and decreased exercise tolerance may indicate that your dog's heart may not be functioning as well as it used to.