



Senior Health Checks for your Cat

What is a senior and why is a senior check up important?

The term “senior” has been chosen to describe the older pet. The number of years considered to be “senior” may vary. As a general rule, Cats are considered senior from 11 years of age with geriatric cats being more than 15 years.

How often should my cat be having a senior health check? A senior health check is recommended every 6 months. Cats age much more rapidly than people do, and health problems can occur quickly. Cats are also very good at hiding their illness.

What problems may occur in senior cats?

Dental Disease

Oral disease is one of the most common health problem of mature cats. Older animals may have fewer teeth or sensitive gums, and they suffer more periodontal disease and increased dental calculus. At home you may notice your pets bad breath, weight loss or difficulty eating. In these cases your cat may need a dental procedure under anesthetic and long term preventative measures like a change in diet and tooth brushing.

Kidney Disease

Kidney disease is much more common with older cats even when compared to 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 is often with urine and blood tests whilst at home looking out for weight loss, excessive drinking or urination may indicate some problems here.

Behaviour Changes

Certain behavioral abnormalities may become more evident including changes in toileting behavior, vocalization and aggression. Some behavior changes may be related to vision or hearing loss.

Arthritis/ Musculoskeletal Changes

Older animals often have decreased lean muscle mass and muscle tone. They are prone to degenerative joint changes such as arthritis. Obesity can exacerbate musculoskeletal disease. “slowing down” is often a sign of underlying discomfort or pain. If your cat has difficulty going up or down steps, does not jump like it used to, or is having accidents outside the litterbox they may have arthritis. Arthritis can be managed with pain relief, changes in exercise and bedding at home. Supplements and Pentosan

Polysulphate injections may also be beneficial to keep your cat pain free.

Hyperthyroidism, Diabetes and Endocrine Diseases

Hyperthyroidism can be very common in senior cats and occurs when they have an overactive thyroid. They will often eat excessively yet lose weight. This condition may also lead to heart changes and if left untreated can be fatal. Similarly, diabetes is seen in many senior cats. In this case they will also lose weight but will tend to drink excessively and may be urinating more frequently than before.

Cancer

Unfortunately, cancer is much more common in the senior pet, yet again cats may hide evidence of this more so than in dogs. The type of cancer can vary and therefore the symptoms that your cat may show will vary also.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

If your cat hasn't been vaccinated for FIV and has been in cats fights in the past they may have contracted this virus and often as a senior may start to show signs of the disease. FIV causes disease because it reduces the ability of the cat's immune system to respond to other infections. Infections that would normally be overcome and cleared become prolonged, chronic or recurrent.

What will the senior health check involve?

Your cat will spend the day at our clinic with so that we can perform a complete health check. We will also run an in house blood and urine test. At the end of the day we will discuss findings with you and come up with a plan to ensure your cat stays healthy and happy.