



*The care and well-being of your pets, our patients, is our utmost concern.*

## **MANAGING THE HEALTH OF YOUR SENIOR PET**

Few things in life are as satisfying as the loving companionship our pets provide. Your pet has become a valued member of your family, and we want to make sure his or her remaining years are as healthy and enjoyable as possible. Progress in the field of veterinary medicine over the years has increased our knowledge and ability to deal with the problems of aging animals. As your pet ages, he or she will encounter many of the same health problems faced by older humans. To help detect these problems as early as possible, we make the following recommendations:

### **COMPREHENSIVE WELLNESS EXAMS**

Since pets age 5-7 times faster than humans, it can be estimated that one physical examination per year for a pet is equivalent to one exam every 5-7 years in humans. The senior wellness exam includes a detailed physical examination and laboratory tests. Many medical problems can be diagnosed through the use of laboratory diagnostic testing long before clinical signs of disease become evident. Specific recommendations for your pet may include:

- ❖ Heartworm Testing
- ❖ Complete Blood Counts
- ❖ Blood Chemistry Screening
- ❖ Urinalysis
- ❖ Internal Parasite Examination
- ❖ Thyroid Screening

### **NUTRITION**

We recommend feeding a high quality pet food specifically formulated for seniors (look for food manufactured by major companies with “AAFCO” printed on the label). Hill’s Science Diet®, which is available at the clinic, comes in many varieties for all types of dogs and cats. Do not feed your pet any human food as this can cause vomiting and/or diarrhea, and some human food is toxic to pets.

As pets get older, water consumption becomes much more important. Increased thirst and water consumption is a very important clinical sign in several senior pet medical problems. Be sure to notify our staff if you see changes in your pet’s water consumption.

### **VACCINATIONS**

Depression of the immune system occurs in older pets, making them more susceptible to common infectious diseases. Maintaining vaccinations is very important due to the potential for decreased resistance in these pets. Vaccination recommendations must be individualized for each pet based on breed, age, physical condition, and diseases prevalent in the area.

### **HEARTWORM PREVENTION**

Heartworms are actual worms that are transmitted by mosquitoes and take residence in a dog or cat’s heart. Heartworm disease causes serious and permanent damage to the heart and lungs that leads to heart failure and/or death. To prevent heartworm disease, your pet must take heartworm prevention every 30 days without fail. Testing is performed annually to confirm that your pet hasn’t contracted heartworms.

## PREVENT OBESITY

Extra pounds burden the heart, kidneys, muscles, & joints, decreasing life expectancy by 30-50%. It is much harder to lose weight than to prevent the weight gain. If you have questions concerning the amount of food to feed your pet, speak with one of our veterinarians or technicians. Special diets are available to help decrease excess weight. Also remember, **don't over feed the treats**. If your pet begins to gain weight quickly and/or acts ravenous at feeding times, please let us know, as this may be a sign of a medical condition.

## DENTAL HYGIENE

Periodontal disease is a very serious problem in senior pets. Tartar buildup is a result of bacterial infection in the mouth. Once the bacteria become attached to the teeth **BELOW THE GUM** line, it becomes a "seed" of infection that spreads all over the body. Many respiratory, kidney, liver, and heart infections are a result of bacteria spreading from the mouth. Dental exams, routine use of dental hygiene products, and dental scaling/polishing are important for a healthy mouth.

## GROOMING AND NAIL TRIMMING

Maintaining healthy skin & toe nails makes your pet more comfortable & prevents odor. Notify the Town and Country Animal Hospital if you observe excessive scratching, flaking, fleas, ticks, sores, or bald spots. Skin growths/or tumors are also more common in senior pets and early removal decreases pain, your costs, and chances of spreading.

## FLEA AND TICK CONTROL

We have excellent weapons in our war on fleas & ticks. For dogs we recommend Advantage® or Advantix® topical flea control or Comfortis® oral flea control. For cats we recommend Advantage® or Revolution® topical flea control. All of these products are given once a month to prevent fleas and are available at Town and Country Animal Hospital. **DO NOT BE FOOLED!** Similar over the counter products are not the same—and in fact can be fatal to your pet.

## MEDICATING YOUR PET

**NEVER** give any human medications or medications prescribed for other pets to your senior pets. Some human medication can be toxic to pets, especially senior pets that may have decreased organ function. Human pain medication is especially dangerous, as pets take much longer to break down the medication, making overdosing a common problem. Always call and speak with one of the Town and Country Animal Hospital veterinarians before giving any medication that is not prescribed for your pet or that may be out of date.

## Present your senior pet for examination if you observe any of the following:

- ❖ Sustained, significant increase in water consumption. {more than 1.5 cups (12 oz.) /10# body weight/day}
- ❖ Sustained, significant increase in urination. (volume and/or frequency)
- ❖ Weight loss
- ❖ Diarrhea that lasts over 2 days.
- ❖ Significant increase in appetite
- ❖ Repeated vomiting
- ❖ Difficulty in passing stool or urine
- ❖ Decrease in activity
- ❖ Episodes of sudden weakness, collapse, or fainting spells
- ❖ Significant decrease in appetite or failure to eat for more than 2 consecutive days

- ❖ Inappropriate elimination, accidents in the house or general changes in bowel habits
- ❖ Lameness that lasts more than 3 days, or lameness in more than one leg
- ❖ Noticeable decrease in vision, especially if sudden in onset, or pupils that do not constrict in bright light. Eye discharges or reddening of the white parts of the eye.
- ❖ Masses, ulcerations (open sores), or multiple scabs on the skin that persists more than 1 week
- ❖ Foul mouth odor or drooling that lasts more than 24 hours
- ❖ Increased size of the abdomen
- ❖ Persistent coughing, gagging, or panting
- ❖ Hair loss, especially if accompanied by scratching
- ❖ Seizures (convulsions)
- ❖ Reluctance or inability to chew dry food
- ❖ Any changes in routine behavior or personality

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 7:30am-6:00pm

Wednesday 7:30am-12:00pm

Saturday 8:00am-12:00pm

Town and Country Animal Hospital 601-261-3839

[www.tomricksdvm.net](http://www.tomricksdvm.net)

We have a Facebook® fan page! Look us up on Facebook® & become a fan! Your pet's pick might just get posted on our page!

## COMMON TOXINS/POISONS

- ❖ Houseplants: Philodendron, Poinsettias, Mistletoe, Lilies, Oleander
- ❖ Medicines: **never** give any human medication without speaking to a veterinarian
- ❖ Automotive products: any liquid out of a car is poisonous
- ❖ Household products: read all packaging before using around the house
- ❖ Insecticides: read all packaging before using around the house
- ❖ Rat Poison: keep all poisons out of the reach of your pets. If you suspect ingestion, call the clinic or E-vets immediately
- ❖ Food: chocolate (all forms), onion, onion powder, raisins, grapes, salt, macadamia nuts, avocados, coffee, garlic, alcoholic beverages, xylitol (Splenda, sugar free gum), raw yeast dough, moldy/spoiled foods, tea leaves

## EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Town and Country Animal Hospital is affiliated with Emergency Vets. If you have an after hour emergency you can reach the emergency veterinarian and/or technician at **601-450-3838**.

Information provided is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for veterinary care. Please contact Town and Country Animal Hospital at 601-261-3839 for more information. If your pet is sick, injured, or in need of medical attention, contact us or an emergency animal hospital immediately