



State Road Veterinary Clinic

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Caring for the Elderly Pet

As a general rule, dogs and cats enter their “senior” years at seven years of age. This can vary, however, with breed and size. Great Danes, for instance, are considered senior at five years of age. Our senior pets require a more intense level of care because as they age, they become more susceptible to health problems and respond differently to their environment. What may seem like normal aging changes could be a symptom of an underlying disease.

Symptoms commonly mistaken for aging changes:

- Difficulty climbing stairs
- Increased stiffness or limping
- Loss of housetraining
- Increased thirst or urination
- Excessive panting
- Changes in activity level
- Circling or repetitive behavior
- Persistent vocalization
- Decreased responsiveness
- Tremors or seizures
- Skin and haircoat changes
- Changes in sleeping patterns
- Altered appetite and weight change
- Loss of vision or hearing

It is recommended that our senior patients be seen every six months for a routine wellness physical exam. Health problems can be detected and diagnosed earlier if pets are seen twice a year rather than once a year. At this time, we can also address any changes you are noticing in your senior pet.

We also recommend that senior age pets receive a senior wellness profile once a year. This is a bloodscreen whose goal is to detect an illness in its early stages. This bloodscreen gives us an idea of the overall health of your pet and may prompt us to run further tests to rule out certain diseases senior age pets are prone to developing. Our goal is early detection and early intervention. Detecting an illness in its early stage increases the chance of a successful treatment. Detecting a terminal illness in the early stages could mean better quality and longer life for our senior pets as well.