

PawPrint

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Apple Valley Animal Hospital

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The Senior Edition

It's a cool day and an old dog or cat is slowly getting up from a long nap in its favorite sunny spot. Who hasn't seen that sight and been just a little jealous? It's inevitable, changes happen as pets age just as when we do. They may not see as well, sleep a little more or maybe they don't hear everything they use to. These are some of the expected changes. But it's easy to miss potentially serious signs of illness by writing everything off to "old age". Maybe the pet in our example above chooses that spot because the warmth helps relieve the pain of aching, arthritic joints. And while a long snooze may be just what he wants, he may be spending so much time there because he's stiff and it's difficult or painful to do the things he did when he was younger.

We know our patient's golden years can be some of their best and we're serious about helping you help them. That's why we are dedicated to our seniors.

So when does a pet become a senior? A commonly accepted formula says one "human" year equals seven "dog" or "cat" years. So an eight years old dog is the equivalent of a fifty-six years old person. For many dogs and cats this formula is reasonably true. To be more accurate, the pet's size needs to be included. Using an age and weight formula, pets are considered senior by the following table.

Small breed dogs	(0-20lbs.)	Ten years
Medium breed dogs	(21-50 lbs.)	Nine years
Large breed dogs	(51-110 lbs.)	Seven years
Giant breed dogs	(>110 lbs.)	Five years
Cats (domestic breeds)		Ten years

People often ask us, "Why is it important to think about my pet as senior?" Just like us, a pet's physiology changes as it ages. Unlike us, they can't explain how they feel. The subtle changes require us to be more observant to recognize signs of illness, disease and pain (listed on page three). Tissues

degrade causing progressive joint disease, arthritis, weakness and instability. Periodontal disease is more common and can cause infection, tooth loss and a decline in general health. Skin becomes thinner and less elastic while calluses thicken. Proper bedding becomes important for the pet's comfort. Lower activity levels let nails grow long faster and because old pet's nails are more brittle, additional care is needed to maintain them. The stomach lining thins, digestive enzymes decrease and liver function declines making diet changes beneficial.

Often, these problems are very manageable with simple changes or treatments. Advances in veterinary medicine are helping our pets live longer, healthier and happier lives. *That's great news because it means we can have our enthusiastic companions longer than ever before!*



November is Adopt a Senior Pet Month

Why adopt a senior pet? Well let me tell ya!

- ~ They've seen things: They're generally quieter, calmer & less likely to get overly excited by common events.
- ~ No terrible twos! With puppy and kitten days behind them, they aren't chewing, climbing, scratching or eating things they shouldn't.
- ~ They're ready to go for a walk: Most seniors are familiar with a leash, meet people & pets calmly and love it.
- ~ They listen! Seniors often know basic commands.
- ~ They will be loyal, grateful family members. They know when they have it good and will love you for it.

Inside This Issue:

Meet our Staff:	
Kayce	2
Senior Care	2
Sr. Warning Signs ...	3
Technology	3
Fall Pet Hazards	4
Senior Pet Tips	4
Fall Precautions	4



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Find us, Like us, and get a free bag of Lean Treats next time you come in.
(Through the month of October.)

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Meet Our Staff: Kayce

We are excited to welcome Kayce as the newest member of our healthcare team. An Asheville native, Kayce has spent her life around animals and brings us nine years experience as a Registered Veterinary Technician. After receiving her R.V.T. from the Central Carolina program, she worked in Raleigh for five years. Two of those years were at a hospital specializing in animal rehabilitation. There she gained insight into the recovery and rehabilitation process after injuries and major surgeries. Following her passion in



Kayce administers K-Laser therapy to reduce arthritis inflammation.

animal rehabilitation, Kayce completed Certification as a Level II Reiki therapist with additional training in Cranio-sacral techniques.

Kayce has two dogs, Margo and Olive, and a cat named Rocky. Outside work her interests include hiking, kayaking, photography, drawing and spending time with family and friends. "I'm very happy to be part of the AVAH team, everyone shows true compassion for patients and clients."

Please join us in welcoming Kayce.

Senior Healthcare At AVAH

Because pets "age" more quickly than we do, it's important to catch problems as early as possible. The very best means of early detection is an informed, observant owner and regular veterinary examinations. Because the health of our senior patients is important to us, we have negotiated with a regional veterinary laboratory to offer a Senior Exam package at a \$38 saving.

Our Senior Package includes a complete examination of the twelve body systems, ophthalmic exam, pain and mobility analysis, blood work, urinalysis, fecal screen, risk assessment and vaccine recommendations, parasite prevention review, diet and nutritional counseling and a behavior review. Since our pets can't tell us how they feel, doctors rely on interpretation of examination and laboratory results to find the problem.

....we have negotiated with a regional laboratory to offer a Senior Exam package at a \$38 savings.



We have designed the Senior Exam Package to provide you and the doctor a wealth of information about your pets physical condition. We want all our older patients to have the best possible health through their Senior years.

Feline D. J. D.

A published report compared the written medical records of one hundred cats older than twelve years to x-rays of those cats taken at the North Carolina State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

Degenerative joint disease (a progressive and increasing painful condition in cats similar to arthritis in humans) was evident in x-rays of ninety percent of the cats., yet records of only four cats contained any mention of D.J.D. by the owner or the veterinarian. The study concluded that D.J.D. occurs in most senior cats and may be overlooked.

Senior Pet Behavior Changes:

It is not unusual for older pets to experience behavior changes. And while some changes like diminished hearing or sight may be normal, it may also be a sign of an underlying condition. Early diagnosis is important because, caught

early, treatments can control or the slow the progress of many diseases and health conditions. As always, the first line of defense for a pet is an informed, observant owner. If a behavior change has a medical reason, medication or treatment can often help. Let's consider a dog that has

"lost" its house training. It could be a very treatable problem like a urinary tract infection. Or, it could be inelasticity of its bladder and more frequent opportunities to "do its business" would solve the problem. A senior cat with the same symptom may need a more accessible litter box. Our doctors and staff have worked with many owners helping them help their senior pets.



Pain Management

Veterinary Studies show proactive pain management significantly increases survival rates in critical cases and speeds recovery in all cases. In keeping with the highest standards of veterinary medicine, we prescribe pain relief medications for all surgical procedures, traumas and pain conditions.

Warning Signs for Seniors

Common Senior Problems:

Dental Disease: Veterinary studies show proper dental care adds an average of two years to a pet's life.

Obesity increases the risk of diabetes, spinal disc failure and arthritis.

Endocrine Disease: Monitoring these values can help us prevent heart, liver and kidney damage.

Liver and Kidney Disease: Decreased function can lead to chemical imbalances, anemia, clotting disorders, increased urination and even personality changes.

Heart Disease, though serious, is often manageable with proper medications.

Arthritis is painful, making your pet less active and enthusiastic. Effective, affordable supplements are available.

Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome Symptoms of CDS are often attributed to normal aging. In many cases medications can reverse these symptoms, adding to the quality of your pet's life. Signs of

CDS include: aimless wandering, appearing lost or confused, standing at the wrong side of doors, less family interaction, sleeping more, sleeping less at night, forgetting house training, pacing, appetite and behavior changes.

Cancer Early detection is very important. Watch for lumps in or under the skin. The doctor will suggest tests for early detection based on your pet's breed.

What to Watch For:

Changes in water consumption, change in appetite, change in urine production (especially an increase), change in fur coat, lethargy or depression, changes in personality, staring into space, bumping into things, vomiting or diarrhea, bad breath, weight change, constipation, lumps in or under the skin, persistent cough, stiffness or reduced agility, excessive panting, difficulty climbing stairs, difficulty chewing, noticeable decrease in vision.

Technology Spotlight

Computers, lasers, laboratory equipment, vital sign monitors, surgery, medications, preventive care... Veterinary medicine is constantly growing. Advances in human medicine benefit our pets. If its cutting edge on the human side, veterinary medicine will have it within two years. Almost every major human technology and pharmaceutical company has an "animal health" division. In fact, it is estimated that veterinary medical knowledge doubles every five years. That is a staggering amount of information to process. But what technology is the most important to your pet? We believe the most important veterinary technology asset is a dedicated, highly trained veterinary staff. Our small staff has over sixty-nine years of combined veterinary experience. Our doctors are required to attend 20



hours of continuing education annually. Our certified technicians are required to attend 14 hours every two years. While those are the minimums set by their licensing boards, our staff choose to attend significantly more C.E.

each year. And, though not required by the NC Veterinary Medical Board, all our staff members attended C.E. programs in 2011. Beginning in 2012, formal requirements for employment at AVAH will include continuing education for *every* staff member. We have chosen to make current, continuing professional education a very high priority at Apple Valley Animal Hospital.

That's technology delivered with a human touch!

Notable Quotes:

"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion." ~ Anonymous

"There are two means of refuge from the misery of life - music and cats. ~ Albert Schweitzer

"Old dogs, like old shoes, are comfortable. They might be a bit out of shape and a little worn around the edges, but they fit well." ~ B. Wilcox



Drop-off Appointments: Making Your Life Easier

If your pet needs to be seen but your schedule is full, ask about a drop-off appointment. Rest assured, your pet will be treated like royalty while its here.

Likewise, if our schedule is full and your pet needs to be seen, we may suggest you drop your pet off. The doctor will work with your pet throughout the day. In either case, we will keep you informed and the doctor will call to discuss results and treatment options if any are needed.

Making Their Lives Better

A few small changes at home can have a big impact on your senior pet's quality of life.

Keep bowls of fresh, clean water on every level of your home. This will keep your senior pet from having to go up and down stairs so often.

Use elevated feeders to make eating and drinking more comfortable for large dogs. Raised bowls reduce neck, shoulder and back strain.

Cover slippery floors with a path of non-skid rugs or mats to prevent slipping, sliding and possible injury.

If your pet is allowed on furniture or beds, a pet ramp or a set of steps (available at most pet supply stores) will make getting up and down easier and less painful.

Provide a comfortable, well-padded bed in a warm and quiet area. Beds specifically designed for older pets reduce stress on joints and pressure points. To reduce trips up and down stairs, some owners have a pet bed on each level of their home.

Frequent grooming is essential for senior pets. Brushing improves circulation, skin condition, and helps keep their coat mat-free. Use the grooming time to look for any new lumps, rashes or sores on your pet. Also, check their nails regularly. As pets slow down, they do not wear their nails down the way they use to. Properly trimmed nails are more comfortable and make walking easier, especially on slick surfaces.

If your senior pet pulls while on a leash, using a harness instead of a collar will reduce neck strain.

It is important that children know how to help keep their senior companion safe and well. Rough-housing with a senior pet should never be allowed. Extra supervision is necessary around small children, teaching them to be kind and gentle. Older pets can be less tolerant of stressful situations like screaming, teasing or being hurt.

Give your senior pet lots of love and attention. Keep them comfortable, active and involved in your families life. It may require a little extra time and patience, but having your healthy, happy companion for as long as possible is priceless.

Halloween Costume Contest

Prizes will be awarded to 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners.

To enter, submit a photo of your pet in costume. Include: Your name, pet pictured, phone number. (Photos will become the property of AVAH and will not be returned.) Entries will be accepted until October 24th. Stop by between Oct. 25th and Oct. 31st to vote for your favorite costume. SPOOKTACULAR refreshments will be available Oct. 31st! Votes will be counted and winners notified Nov. 1st.



It's A Girl!

We are proud to introduce Morgan Breanna McKee, the newest member of the AVAH family. Born to Drs. Patrick and Jennifer McKee, Morgan came into the world at eight pounds eleven ounces and twenty-one inches.

We're sure Morgan has veterinary medicine in her blood and we all look forward to seeing her grow up in the family profession.

Welcome to the world Miss Morgan!



Fall Pet Hazards

Snake Bites: We see an increase in snake bites this time of year. If your pet has access to snake habitats, consider the Rattlesnake Vaccine which also provides a level of protection against copperhead bites.

Poisons: The use of rodenticides goes up this time of year as mice seek shelter from cooler temperatures.

Anti-freeze: It smells good, tastes sweet and a very small amount can kill a pet. Watch for spills & leaks.

Cars: Cats love to nap in warm places like engine compartments. If you have cats, tap the horn before you start your car.

Halloween: Pets can be frightened by costumes and ingesting decorations like fake cobwebs can be deadly. Keep you pet in a quiet part of the house during the festivities.

Thanksgiving: Rich foods can cause vomiting and serious peritonitis while some candies are toxic to pets. Symptoms include: trembling, vomiting, diarrhea, excessive thirst or urination, muscle spasms and seizures. If you have any concerns, don't wait. Call us. During special occasions, it's always a good idea to watch out for pets the way you would for children.

Bladder Stones: Fall is the most common time of year for male cats to form bladder stones that block the flow of urine. Any cat that seems to be straining to use the bathroom should see the doctor immediately. Why this time of year? It may have to do with the pet's decreased water intake in cooler weather.

