



# Answers to FAQs about our senior pets

■ COURTESY BAYSHORE ANIMAL HOSPITAL AND AMERICAN VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

**Q:** When does a pet become “old”?

**A:** It varies, but cats and small dogs are generally considered geriatric at the age of 7. Larger-breed dogs tend to have shorter lifespans and are considered geriatric when they are approximately 6 years of age. Owners tend to want to think of their pet’s age in human terms. While it is not as simple as “1 human year = X cat/dog years”, there are calculations that can help put a pet’s age in human terms:

Age: Human Equivalents for Older Pets	
CAT YEARS	HUMAN YEARS
7	45
10	58
15	75
20	98
DOG YEARS	HUMAN YEARS (*dog size pounds)
7	Small – Medium: 44-47 Large – Very large: 50-56
10	Small – Medium: 56-60 Large – Very large: 66-78
15	Small – Medium: 76-83 Large – Very large: 93-115
20	Small – Medium: 96-105 Large: 120

\*Small: 0-20 lbs; Medium: 21-50 lbs; Large: 51-90 lbs; Very large: 90+ lbs  
The oldest recorded age of a cat is 34 years.  
The oldest recorded age of a dog is 29 years.

**Q:** What health problems can affect older pets?

**A:** As pets age, they are more prone to developing certain diseases or conditions, including:

- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Cognitive decline
- Deafness
- Dental disease
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Intestinal disease
- Joint and Bone disorders
- Kidney disease
- Liver disease
- Vision problems

- Changes in weight, appetite or thirst
- Changes in urination or bowel movements
- Lumps or sores that do not heal
- Sneezing, coughing or breathing difficulties
- Bleeding or discharge from a body opening
- Foul odor to breath
- Weakness or decreased activity
- Vomiting, diarrhea or constipation
- Change in behavior

**Q:** What can I do to keep my senior pet healthy?

**A:** Most experts agree that healthy senior pets should see their veterinarian every six months. Your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical exam and recommend testing to further evaluate your pet’s health. Senior testing may include complete blood count, organ function tests, urinalysis, parasite testing, blood pressure and electrocardiogram. This allows your veterinarian to detect signs of disease at their earliest, when disease is most treatable. Monitor you pet at home between exams and promptly notify your veterinarian of any changes in your pet. Keep in mind that signs may be subtle. Cats in particular are very good at hiding signs of illness. In particular, watch for:

**Q:** My senior pet isn’t as active as he used to be. I think he might be in pain. What should I do?

**A:** First, talk to your veterinarian and have them examine your pet. Your pet might have arthritis. There are a variety of arthritis treatments available for dogs and cats and your veterinarian can advise you on the best treatment plan for your pet. Do not give human pain medications to your pet without first consulting your veterinarian. Some human products, including over-the-counter medications, can be fatal for pets. Signs of arthritis in pets vary and may include:

- Favoring a limb
- Sleeping more
- Weight gain
- Wont climb stairs
- Behavior changes or increased irritability
- Difficulty sitting or standing
- Appearing stiff
- Hesitancy to jump or run
- Decreased activity