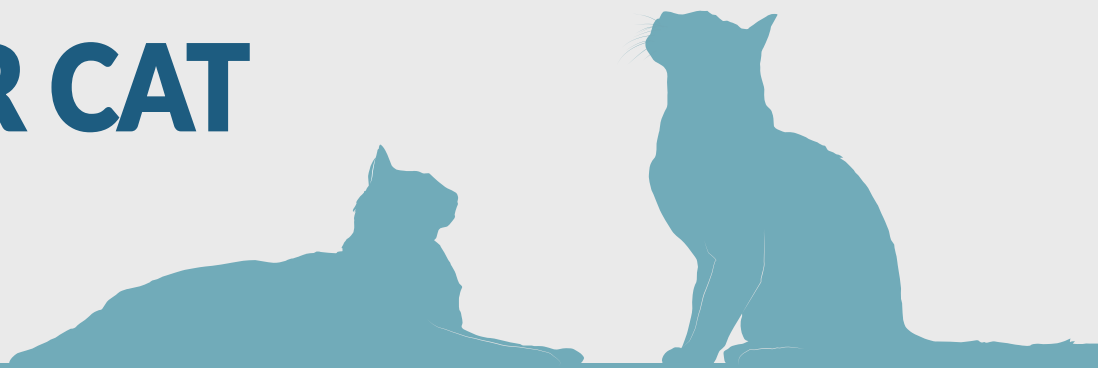




LIVING WITH A SENIOR CAT



Caring for an older cat

Living with an older cat will come with some extra considerations as there may be age-related health concerns to think about and you may also observe possible changes to behavior and the formation of new habits.

Cats in their senior years may need slight adjustments to their environment as well as plenty of love, TLC and possibly patience and extra care as they transit into this new life stage.

We highly recommend that all cats over the age of 7 years (yes, 7 is considered “senior”!) have an annual Senior Health Profile check, which includes blood testing, urinalysis, blood pressure monitoring as well as a comprehensive physical examination and behavioural evaluation to ensure there are no underlying issues that need addressing.

Key resources



- **Food** – Seek advice from a vet regarding an appropriate senior diet to ensure the cat is receiving all the nutrients needed for optimum health. Feeding 3 - 4 small meals a day will help with digestion.
- **Water** – Intake can be increased by incorporating 'wet' food to the cat's diet, having multiple water dishes and ideally a water fountain.
- **Litter box** – Provide multiple shallow trays for easy access with a choice of litter.
- **Social interactions** – Older cats like a quiet lifestyle and don't like too much change. Allow them to initiate and determine the amount of social interactions they have with you. In general, multiple short petting sessions are better than fewer lengthy ones.
- **Resting** – Igloo beds will provide a snugly safe place and hiding spot.

Physiological changes

- Changes in vision may occur as the cat's ability to focus is reduced with age. Some cats may compensate by limiting their daily activities.
- Reduced hearing is common and could be associated with more vocalization. Older cats often sleep deeply and may startle more easily.
- Digestion may slow down and the older cat will need a diet more suited to its needs. Any diarrhea or vomiting should not be ignored.



Physiological changes

- Dental disease may be prevalent and cause a loss in appetite. Regular dental checks are advised and a home dental care regime should be implemented.
- Nail care could be reduced due to less scratching and ingrown nails should be checked for regularly. Regular nail trims may greatly help overall mobility. Keep a close eye on your older cat's coat as reduced grooming can be a sign of dental disease, osteoarthritis or general ill health. A dry, matted coat is cause for concern and mats in general can be painful and will need attention from a groomer. An older cat's skin will lose elasticity so careful handling and stroking are crucial.
- As their metabolism slows, older cats may seek out warm, sunny places so ensure you put a comfy bed in these key areas.



Behaviour



Your older cat may display behavioural changes such as increased vocalization, urinating outside of the litter box or disorientation and reduced social interactions. Whilst these may be due to a slowing down in nerve function, they may also be symptomatic of other age-related changes such as chronic osteoarthritic pain, dental pain, hormonal diseases or other medical problems.

If you notice a change in your older cat's behavior, please take them for a full physical evaluation at your veterinary clinic immediately. There may be many things that can be done to manage these issues and greatly improve your older cat's welfare and quality of life.

An older cat's world gets smaller - ensure all key resources are easily accessible.