



PEPE'S PERSPECTIVE

South Anderson Veterinary Clinic

www.southandersonvet.com/pepespectives.html

Senior Wellness--Part 2:

Thanks for joining us again to talk about our beloved pets in their golden years! Today, we will be talking about some more body systems that your veterinarian will be able to check on through a thorough physical exam or certain diagnostics such as bloodwork, radiographs, etc. Many of the systems/organs we will be talking about today are more difficult to notice signs of disease in since they are internal organs and have such a high reserve capacity for their normal functions that they only show outward signs of breakdown once a high percentage of that particular organ is affected. Therefore it is very important to further investigate those particular organs or systems if your veterinarian detects even mild changes. Let's start by talking about, arguably, the most important organ in the body...the heart!

-Heart: Senior pets not uncommonly have underlying heart disease (valve disease, heart failure, etc.) that can be detected by listening with a stethoscope or taking a radiograph of the chest. Many of these heart diseases can be managed with medications and regular examinations. Has your pet been coughing lately, or getting tired quickly while playing or exercising? These may be signs of heart disease.



-Respiratory: As our pets age, their lungs often lose some of their elasticity making it more difficult to breathe. Often times, our pets will show us signs of respiratory disease by breathing more heavily, making noise while breathing, or coughing (also a sign of heart disease).

-Liver/Kidneys: These very important organs are responsible for removing toxins, drugs, and other harmful substances from the body. The liver also helps digest

and process the foods that we feed our pets. The kidneys

are also responsible for making and concentrating the urine our pets produce. Many diseases in our pets will affect the kidneys and cause increased thirst and urination. Many liver and kidney diseases are only able to be diagnosed by routine blood work and urinalysis.



-Reproductive: Senior pets that are intact (not neutered or spayed) are predisposed to various types of cancer—testicular, prostatic, uterine or mammary cancer. Intact females also have a relatively high incidence of a life-threatening infection in the uterus called pyometra. Watch your pets for abnormal discharge from their

reproductive tract, painful or bloody urination, and consult your veterinarian as soon as possible if any of these signs are seen.

-Musculoskeletal: Arthritis plagues many of our pets, and while we cannot prevent it, we can prescribe medications and physical therapy to minimize the effects, slow the progression, and provide comfort. Weight control is also very beneficial in minimizing the long-term effects of arthritis. Chronic back pain, or vertebral disc issues, can also be helped with appropriate pain medications as indicated. Has your pet been limping, or having difficulty getting up/down, difficulty with stairs, or just seem generally uncomfortable? These can be signs of joint pain.

Well, that wraps up our talk about senior pets! We hope that this newsletter has given you the information that you need to know what to watch for in your pets when you are at home, and also what to talk to your veterinarian about when you visit the clinic next. Call SAVC to schedule your 6 month physical exam for your furry children.

Dr. Crabtree and Megan