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NORTH QUEENSLAND SPECIALIST EQUINE SERVICE



Senior Pet Care

Life passes quickly. The frolicking baby brought home just a few short years ago matures into a mellow senior in what seems like the blink of an eye. Given our pets have an average lifespan of 10-18 years; they age more quickly than we do with an average lifespan of 75-85 years. This is where the "1 human year equals 7 pet years" theory comes into play. Did you know that cats and small dogs are regarded as seniors by 8 years of age and large breed dogs by 6 years of age?

Senior pets have different care requirements than those of younger animals. This fact probably doesn't come as a surprise to anyone. As your family pet ages there are two main groups of changes that arise.

- ❖ The first includes the age related changes that you may notice at home, for example hearing loss, loss of sight, reduced activity.
- ❖ The second change is pathological and of greater health consequences, however it is less obvious to you, the primary care giver.

These changes are numerous and include heart, kidney and liver disease, diabetes, hormonal issues, incontinence, thyroid abnormalities, obesity, tumors and arthritis. Some of these processes are preventable altogether and they are all treatable or manageable. The earlier these changes are detected, the better the treatment outcome.

What can you do to help keep your precious pet healthy in their senior years? Here are some tips:

- **Veterinary checkups every 6 months**
 - While this seems frequent, this only equates to us having a check-up about every 3 1/2 years at the doctor. Pets cannot tell us when they are beginning to feel slightly unwell and these checkups allow early detection.
- **A routine blood profile at least 12 monthly**
 - Many internal diseases can be detected by changes in blood tests way before your pet is showing any signs. The sooner we identify a problem, the sooner we can start to manage it or better yet, cure it!
- **Good nutrition**
 - The nutritional needs of an older pet are different to a young animal. Obesity is linked with an increased chance of many different diseases as well as affecting joints. A consultation to discuss diet with one of our trained nurses is complimentary, but needs to be pre booked.

Find the Words

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Answers: See Website Link: <http://townsvillevetclinic.com.au/newsletters>



Senior Pet Month
15% OFF
Senior Pet Consults



TRADING HOURS:

Monday to Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm
 Saturday 8.00am to 4.00pm

- **Dental Care**
 - Many aged dogs and cats will develop dental disease. Dental disease is fortunately one of the disease processes we can readily cure. Dental health is something we assess at your pet's 6 monthly health checks.
- **Regular graduated exercise**
 - Keeping active is very important for our pets. Short walks tailored to your pet's ability can help keep joints mobile and help with avoiding weight gain
- **Environment management**
 - Suddenly changing furniture, getting new pets and having new people come and stay can stress out an old pet, particularly if they are vision impaired.
- **Management of arthritis and joint pain**
 - A pet with arthritis is a pet in pain. We can do a lot to manage arthritis and a holistic approach can be tailored to your individual pet. Treatments include: Non steroidal anti inflammatory drugs, Pentosan injections, in food nutraceuticals such as glucosamine/chondroitin (e.g. Joint guard) and epiitalis (4cyte) and managing them with a modified exercise program or physiotherapy.
- **Provide your pet with special accommodations:**
 - For instance, those with arthritis might benefit from soft bedding in the form of a special bed and somewhere warm to sleep especially on those cooler nights.

CONTACT EMAIL: vet@townsvillevetclinic.com.au



Caring for Senior Horses: What you need to know

100 years ago horses were considered old and past their prime by 10-15 years of age. Thankfully now with improved knowledge, better management practices and widely used preventative health care measures our horses can live longer and serve their purpose well into their 20's and sometimes even into their 30's. We have provided some information how you can best care for your senior horse.

Parasite Control – Senior horses can be more susceptible to intestinal parasites than other adult, healthy horses. The worm control program of the geriatric horse needs to be vigorous with regular worm counts, routine de-worming and good pasture management.

Vaccinations – A geriatric horse's immune system is often compromised and they are potentially more susceptible to infectious diseases. By ensuring vaccinations are up to date you can help avoid preventable diseases such as tetanus, strangles and Hendra virus.

Dental care - Over time horses teeth become loose and can completely fall out. This has the potential to cause pain and infections and can also severely limit the horse's ability to chew food. Dental exams twice yearly for your senior horse is recommended because as with most disease processes the earlier these problems are addressed the better the result.

Nutrition - The diets you choose for your senior horse need to be easy to chew, digest AND provide all of their essential nutrient requirements. Thankfully there are a number of fortified diets out there designed for feeding these horses (e.g. gumnuts and old timer). Avoiding fibrous hays such as Rhodes hay, feeding good quality Lucerne hay when fresh green grass is not available and feeding smaller feeds more frequently can also be helpful. If you feel your aged horse has lost condition then speak with our Vets at Townsville Vet Clinic for advice for an appropriate diet.

10% OFF
Senior Horse Consults



Farrier - Regular trims in older horses, even if they are retired, can help avoid problems such as hoof abscesses, laminitis and seedy toe. We recommend trims every 6-8 weeks.

Disease - Senior horses are more susceptible to a multitude of different diseases such as chronic infections, Cushings disease, liver failure, kidney disorders, melanomas and other skin tumours and overall lowered resistance to infectious diseases. While some diseases induce obvious symptoms, other diseases can only be detected through a more rigorous examination and diagnostic work up (e.g. blood tests, ultrasounds, biopsies). When we are armed with this information we start therapy and management to improve quality of life of your senior horse.

Stress and Environment - Simple changes such as relocating a senior horse from one paddock to another or introducing a new animal can be very stressful and frequently result in weight loss and secondary diseases. Consideration should be given to this to ensure your senior horse is not missing out on essential nutrition. Thankfully in North Queensland our winters are mild, however older horses will feel the heat and the cold more than a younger healthy horse. Shelter from the elements and plenty of food and water becomes even more important.

Arthritis - A horse with arthritis is a horse in pain. This pain can limit an older horse's ability to move around and graze, reduce its appetite and contribute to muscle wastage. Joint supplements (such as 4cyte), Pentosan injections and anti-inflammatory medications can be extremely helpful in reducing pain and improving quality of life. Self limited exercise is advisable as locking an arthritic horse up can be associated with increased arthritic pain.

In Summary - By following the above recommendations we can keep our senior horses free from pain, hunger and stress. Sometimes with the right care and management your senior horse can have a happy and productive life including regularly competing in many disciplines well into their 20's. If you have any questions regarding managing your senior horse please feel free to give the clinic a call and ask to speak with one of our friendly veterinarians.



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