

**Murray Bridge
Vet Clinic**

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Seniors

As one human year is approximately 7 dog or cat years, regular checkups are important in detecting the early signs of problems in our senior pets. We recommend assessments every 6-12 months for senior pets, including blood tests so changes can be detected early. With this information a management plan can be put in place before changes significantly affect your pet's quality of life.

At your visit you should mention any changes in your pets : weight, appetite, drinking habits, exercise/energy levels, behaviour, physical state (for example any lumps, coughing, lameness etc)

Some of the things we should specifically watch for are outlined below:

Diet

As your pet gets older their dietary needs change. They require adequate protein to maintain muscle mass, easy to chew biscuits that promote dental health, and antioxidants for a healthy immune system. We recommend specific Hills Science Diets to provide these requirements. Depending on your pet's health other prescription veterinary diets may be more appropriate; for example a kidney or liver diet formulated specifically for problems in these areas.

Older pets are often less active and can tend to gain weight. Excess weight increases the strain on joints and the heart. We can advise you if your pet is overweight and help you with controlling or reducing their weight.

Arthritis

Arthritis is very common in older dogs, and also sometimes seen in older cats. It can be due to a past injury, or from general deterioration of joints as an animal ages. Signs of arthritis include difficulty rising, limping, yelping in pain, personality changes, licking at a sore leg, and changes in appetite. There are a number of treatments available to improve the quality of life for your pet.

Dental

Dental disease often affects older pets by causing discomfort when eating and smelly breath. It can also affect their general health and sometimes lead to other medical problems. With the development of our new dental program, the clinic is well equipped to advise you about your pet's dental health and recommend appropriate treatments.

Heart Disease

As they age our pets can develop heart conditions such as murmurs and cardiomyopathy (enlarged heart). Signs of these conditions may include shortness of breath when exercising, coughing, and lethargy. Some heart conditions are detectable with a stethoscope, and sometimes an x-ray of the chest is needed. With the treatments available, many affected animals can gain a new lease of life.



Lumps and Bumps

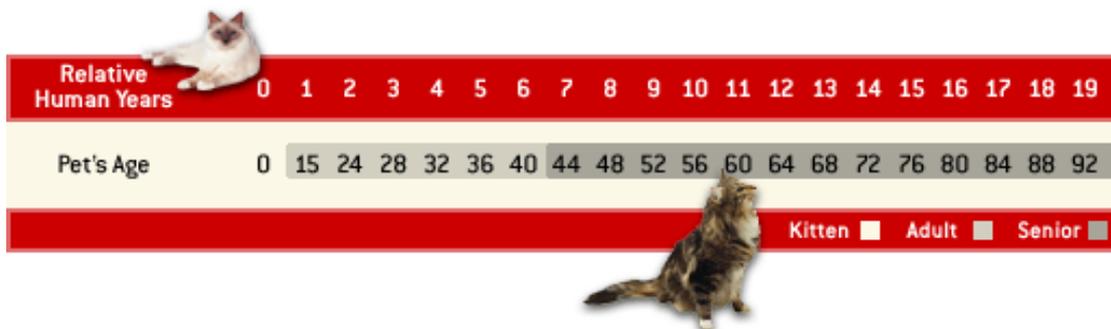
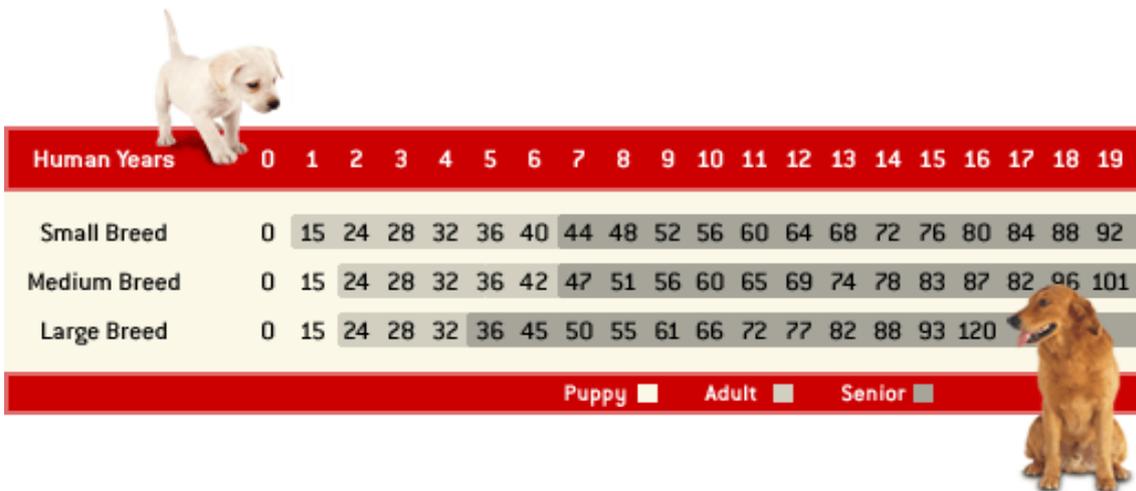
Common in the older pet, many lumps are harmless. However, some lumps can be malignant or uncomfortable for your pet. Make note of any lumps you notice and have a vet examine them so we can advise if it would be best to remove them.

Behaviour

Our pets can exhibit behavioural changes associated with aging. Some changes we see are due to medical problems, others can be due to deterioration of the senses such as sight and hearing or brain ageing. Disorientation, decreased interaction with people, disrupted sleep patterns, and loss of housetraining or obedience, are some behavioural changes owners may notice. Regular veterinary assessment can help you to manage many of these problems and improve your pet's quality of life. A behaviour consultation may be needed to determine the cause of some changes and provide management.

Body Function Tests

Body function in the older pet becomes slower and less reliable. Major organs can deteriorate over time and the changes in your pet may be too subtle to notice. Early detection of organ problems is important for us to be able to manage changes best. These tests are especially important if your pet is going to have a general anaesthetic. Conditions such kidney and liver disease, diabetes and problems with the thyroid gland can be diagnosed through a simple blood test. Many of these conditions can be managed with a combination of medication and special diets.



If you have any further questions please make an appointment with your Veterinarian or ask one of our friendly staff members.