



## Wellness Information For Senior Cats

The age at which a cat is considered senior ranges between 8 to 10 years of age. Signs of aging include exercise intolerance/reduced mobility, weight gain, muscle loss, accidents, or behaviour and memory changes. Some cats may develop cloudy eyes, or lumps on or under their skin.

- Annual blood work is recommended if your cat is 8 years of age or older.
- Annual examinations are required for ongoing prescription refills.
- For medication refills:
  - Call the clinic at least 3 days before you need to refill.
  - Please give us at least 24 hours to get your medication ready; we will call you when it is available for pick up.
  - If the medication is compounded or ordered from a pharmacy, it may take longer to order in. Cost will vary depending on the pharmacy.

### Wellness Visit

As your cat ages, the frequency of wellness visits may increase from one to multiple per year to allow us to prevent or monitor and treat age-related conditions. Annual blood work is recommended on all cats that are 8 years of age or older as it provides the opportunity to detect kidney or liver changes before your cat shows clinical symptoms.

During the wellness visit, your veterinarian will evaluate important things like history, body weight, dental disease, bones and joints, heart and lungs, and skin and digestive system. Additional diagnostics may be recommended depending on your discussions with your veterinarian and their physical exam findings. Annual wellness visits are also required to continue to prescribe ongoing medications.

### Behaviour

Sleeping patterns and cognitive behaviour may change in senior cats. Your cat may develop urinary incontinence or changes in drinking and urination patterns. They may demonstrate discomfort or be more vocal. If your cat is expressing age-related changes, please discuss this with your family veterinarian to better help your cat.

### Obesity

It is important to monitor your cat's body weight as they age. Obesity can lead to a number of health risks including osteoarthritis, diabetes, heart or respiratory disease, cancer, urinary issues, and a reduced lifespan.

On the contrary, cats that are losing weight may have underlying dental disease, or issues with their gastrointestinal tract, liver or kidneys.

Your veterinarian will demonstrate how to assess body condition, discuss blood work or diagnostic options, and help you develop a plan to increase your cat's lifespan.

### Diets

As cats age, their diets may change depending on the conditions they develop. For example:

- Kidney disease may require a low protein diet.
- Feline lower urinary tract disease requires a urinary diet.
- Gastric sensitivity requires a limited ingredient.

Your family veterinarian will discuss appropriate diets as your cats condition changes.

### Licensing Your Pet

All cats and dogs in Calgary must be licensed. If your cat is not already licensed, please visit the website [www.calgary.ca](http://www.calgary.ca) or call 311. You may face a fine if your pet is not licensed.

## Pet Poisons

Many products/medications could be toxic for your cat. If you suspect your cat has been exposed to a toxin, bring it to an emergency clinic. If you are unsure if the product is poisonous, visit

- [www.aspc.org](http://www.aspc.org) or call the National Animal Poison Control (ASPCA)
- 1-888-426-4435

**Consult fee applies; you will be given a case number for your veterinarian follow-up.**

## Dental Care

As cats age, dental disease becomes more prominent. Bad breath and red and inflamed gums may be the first clinical signs your cat has dental disease. Symptoms of pain may be as subtle as a decreased appetite and weight loss over a long period of time. Other symptoms include increased salivation, bleeding gums, frequently pawing at their face, or teeth grinding. Dental disease can affect multiple organs and lead to a number of health issues.

While older cats may be at a greater risk under anesthesia, if a physical exam, blood work, and other necessary diagnostics indicate they are otherwise healthy, their age should not be a reason for not undergoing anesthesia. The sooner you address your cat's teeth, the less likely they will develop issues related to dental disease and the greater the chance they will live longer.



## Outdoor Cats

Allowing cats outdoors without supervision is not recommended as it increases the risk of accidents and trauma related to fights.

**Parasites/Worms:** Outdoor cats are exposed to a number of parasites, some of which are zoonotic (transmitted from animals to humans). If your cat goes outdoors, methods to minimize the spread of diseases from pets to human include regular deworming and washing your hands after handling your cat or their feces.

Medications should be discussed with your family veterinarian before applying. ***Some topical medications purchased at pet stores could be fatal to cats.***

**Ticks in Alberta:** Alberta has a free surveillance program that monitors for the tick that carries the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, which is the cause of Lyme disease in both pets and people. If you find a tick on your cat, please place the tick in a plastic bag or container with a moist tissue and bring it into your veterinary clinic. The tick will be sent away to determine if it carries the bacteria.

## Pet Insurance

Pet insurance is strongly recommended at every age. Having an insurance plan already in place will help ease your concerns when and if an accident or illness happens. Once a pet has a pre-existing illness/accident, the insurance company will not cover it under their health plan. Common insurance companies include:



## Trusted Resources

Veterinary Partner: [www.veterinarypartner.com](http://www.veterinarypartner.com)

Pets Web MD: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

Worms & Germs: [www.wormsandgermsblog.com](http://www.wormsandgermsblog.com)

Indoor Pet Initiative: [www.indoorpet.osu.edu](http://www.indoorpet.osu.edu)