



Wellness Information For Senior Dogs

The age at which a dog is considered senior depends on the breed. Small breed dogs that generally live longer are considered senior around 8 to 10 years of age. A giant breed dog such as a Great Dane may be considered senior closer to 5 to 7 years of age.

- Annual blood work is recommended if your dog 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 dog 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 dogs that are 8 years of age or older as it provides the opportunity to detect kidney or liver changes before your dog shows clinical symptoms. It also provides a baseline in the event your dog develops issues down the road.

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 dogs. Your dog may become less aware of their surroundings, and may give you the impression their sight or hearing is worsening. Dogs may also develop urinary incontinence or changes in drinking and urination patterns. They may demonstrate discomfort or be more vocal. If your dog is expressing age-related changes, please discuss this with your family veterinarian to better help your dog.

Dental Care

As dogs age, dental disease becomes more prominent. Bad breath and red and inflamed gums, or tartar buildup may be the first clinical signs your dog has dental disease. Dental disease could affect multiple organs and lead to a number of health issues.

Brushing your dog's teeth daily with a pet-friendly toothpaste and a soft tooth brush will help prevent tartar buildup but should not be done if your pets teeth are loose or severely diseased.

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

Talk to your veterinarian if you have questions about dental disease or if you would like to book your dog an appointment for a dental.

Pet Poisons

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

- www.aspca.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.

Parasites / Worms

Dogs are exposed to a number of parasites (some of which are transmitted to humans), while outdoors at parks, on walks, or through contact with other animal feces. Regular deworming of your dog, and washing your hands after handling them or their feces will help minimize the spread of diseases.

In addition, dogs that hunt rodents, or ingest are at potential risk of becoming infected with **Echinococcus Multilocularis** (a tapeworm from coyotes). If your dog hunts or eats feces, please ask for our handout on Echinococcus and talk to your family veterinarian.

Travelling With Your Pets

If your dog is travelling outside of the province, they may be exposed to organisms that are not found in Alberta. Vaccines and preventatives could help prevent your pet against some of these diseases/parasites.

Ask us for our handout on 'Travel Information' and 'Potential Risks When Travelling' if you are planning on travelling with your pet.

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 or call 311. You may face a fine if your pet is not licensed.

Obesity

It is important to monitor your dog'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, dogs 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 dog's lifespan.

Boarding, Pet Sitters & Daycare

Most boarding and daycare facilities require an up-to-date Bordatella (kennel cough) vaccine given at least 1 week prior to boarding. Some also require deworming prior to arrival. Plan ahead and know what your dog needs prior to boarding.

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

Pets Web MD: www.webmd.com

Worms & Germs: www.wormsandgermsblog.com

Indoor Pet Initiative: www.indoorpet.osu.edu

Worms & Germs: <https://wormsandgermsblog.com>

City of Calgary: www.calgary.ca