

The Senior Years

Exactly when your dog or cat becomes a senior depends on its size and breed (your veterinarian has guidelines). But at whatever age the "golden years" begin, it is important to see your vet more frequently and to keep your pet trim. Your elderly animal may face a series of new challenges, but new treatments often can help make your companion's last years more comfortable.

Help for cognitive dysfunction:

The canine brain ages, as ours does, and unwanted behaviors can develop, such as getting "lost" in



As your pet ages, keep its weight in check and plan on frequent vet visits.

your home and having house-training accidents. These symptoms were once considered unavoidable. Now, the medication *Anipryl* minimizes them for more than 75% of the dogs who take it.

Treatments for cancer:

Cancer—too often an unwanted companion of old age—strikes dogs about as often as it does people (cats a bit less). The risk increases for all pets as they age. Cancer accounts for about 50% of deaths in cats or dogs older than 10.

A diagnosis of cancer in a pet can be devastating. "It was actually harder for me—and caused many, many more tears—to hear that my dogs had cancer than when I had a brush with it myself," says Vicki Croke, author of *Animal ER*.

Today, animals can get the treatments any other family member would receive, from radiation and chemotherapy to surgery, and treatments are improving all the time. Even so, care can be costly, and the disease can be a formidable adversary. As always, discuss your options carefully with your veterinarian.