

Senior moments

Pets are living longer lives than ever before.

While this allows us to spend more quality time with our furry family, it also leaves us with extra responsibility to ensure they live comfortably in their senior years.

Many of us have had a 'senior moment' or two as we get on in years – keys in the fridge, anyone?

But did you realise that as they age, your dog will have their own version too?

Being aware of your dog's senior moments, as well as what you can do to ensure they remain in tip-top shop, will ensure they're with you for as long as possible.



Fur Life Vet provides health and wellbeing information for you to help care for your pets throughout their lives.


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Senior Dogs

Top tips to help you care for your senior dog



The signs

Just like us humans, dog's go through some very similar signs that let you know they're getting on in years.

- + Their **hair greys**.
- + Their **reflexes aren't as sharp**.
- + Their **senses diminish**, particularly hearing, eyesight & smell.
- + Their **activity levels decrease**.
- + They **sleep longer & more soundly**.
- + Their **movements may appear stiff, laboured or painful**.

Generally speaking, **these signs start to crop up in dogs 10+ years of age**. In bigger breeds, like Great Danes, it may be as early as 8 but for small breeds it may not be until 12 years of age.

While all dogs are individuals and will age at different rates, the best person to help you figure out if Fido has entered their senior years is your vet.

If you notice any of these signs, mention it at your next vet visit.



Top health care tips

1. Up your vet visits

Just like their human counterparts, senior dogs should visit their doctor regularly for check-ups. Aim for a thorough examination every 6 months, as dogs can age as much as 3-4 years (in human terms) in a year. Thank the universe we don't, right?

Remember to mention if you've noticed changes in your animal's physical condition or behaviour. While such changes could be due to your pet's advanced age, they may also be symptoms of a treatable medical condition like osteoarthritis. Early detection means fast and more effective treatment - a win for you and your pet.

Bonus tip: schedule a vet visit in the lead up to the colder months so your best mate is fit and ready before the cold sets in.

2. Rethink your doggy's diet

You might notice your dog eats less which is quite natural if they're not moving around as much. However, even if they're eating less, they may gain weight thanks to the slowing of their metabolism (yep, your doggy's version of the dreaded 'middle age spread!').

It may go the other way too and they lose weight. No matter which one, diet is paramount. Excess weight or nutritional deficiencies can contribute to a variety of health-related issues in older dogs (diabetes, gum/teeth disease etc).

Smaller quantities of low-calorie food are good but table scraps and snacks, hmmm ... not so much. You could also consider two smaller meals per day, rather than one big one. As always, if you're worried about your dog's weight, speak to your vet.

So that's the lowdown on how to care for your dog as they get older. **If you'd like some more information about senior dogs or want to schedule a check-up for your doggie, contact your local Fur Life Vet Clinic.**

3. Make 'em comfy

As they age - particularly if they are overweight or have sore joints - dogs can find it difficult to bend down to eat or drink.

To make it easier, considering investing in a specially designed table with cut-outs for food and drink at variable heights. If you're handy, you can make a DIY one out of a crate - or perhaps something fancier!

4. Grooming & exercise

There's plenty you can do on these fronts to keep your precious pooch strong well into their old age.

- + Stick to a regular worming and parasite schedule.
- + Brush their toothy-pegs regularly.
- + Exercise them as appropriate to their capabilities - consider short bursts of activity.

5. Some good old TLC

As your doggie slows down, your cuddle-factor can amp up! Nothing beats a good cuddle or a bit of focused attention so lavish it upon your pooch to keep them feeling happy and well-loved.

