good as gold

retrieving new nuggets of doggie data

new school

training tricks for older pets

sickness or senioritis?

signs it’s more than just old age

plus:

+ old-world therapies in modern medicine
+ animal welfare’s golden boy

the golden oldies issue 2015 no.3 issue 25
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  Houston, TX | October 18
  New York, NY | November 14 - 15
  Miami, FL | December 5 - 6

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  Fairfax, VA | March 12 - 13
  San Francisco, CA | April 23 - 24
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**dr. ernie ward, dvm**, is a 1992 graduate of the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine. In 2005, he founded the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) to help raise awareness on the dangers of excess weight in dogs and cats. Dr. Ward is a frequent author and lecturer on pet health and is a member of the *Veterinary Economics* Editorial Advisory Board. He has been featured on Animal Planet and has appeared on numerous other television and radio talk shows and newscasts around the country.

**dr. jules benson, bvsc, mrcvs**, graduated from the University of Liverpool School of Veterinary Science before moving moved to the United States in 2004 to work in a Bucks County, PA, small animal practice. He joined Petplan in 2008, and as Chief Veterinary Medical Officer he is regularly consulted by a broad range of media outlets to provide pet health advice to pet parents nationwide. He serves on the Board of Trustees for the Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association (PVMA) and still finds time to practice veterinary medicine at home, where he is both dad and vet to one dog, four cats, three rats, one rabbit and a leopard gecko.

**dr. kim smyth, dvm**, is a 2004 graduate of the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Smyth first began practicing veterinary medicine in a small animal clinic close to Philadelphia, PA. Possessing a knack for giving great pet health advice, Dr. Smyth has authored hundreds of pet health essays and is a contributing expert on Petplan’s *fetch!* blog. Dr. Smyth and her husband have two children, two crazy cats (Joe and Charlie) and one very old dog (Lester).

**dr. nina mantione, vmd**, is a 1995 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine. After working in Philadelphia for several years, she has been in private practice in central Pennsylvania since 2001. Along with gardening and dressage, Dr. Mantione is enthusiastic about pet owner education and gives lectures to local physicians about issues regarding pets and children. She’s no stranger to the subject, either — she and husband John have four children, two horses, three dogs and three cats!

**holly russell**’s Journalism degree from New York University gives her a way with words, but it’s her passion for pets that drew her to join Petplan as Senior Marketing Copywriter in 2012. Holly previously honed her skills working in corporate fundraising and event planning for the Pennsylvania SPCA. When she’s not penning *fetch!* articles and crafting creative copy, Holly relaxes by practicing yoga, kayaking and indoor cycling. She and her two rescued Pit Bulls — Luna and AJ, the three-legged wonderdog — live by the beach in Wilmington, NC.

**carol borchert** trained as a science journalist at Colorado State University’s Department of Journalism and has worked as a writer and editor since 1985. Her love of animals and interest in their welfare led her early on to focus her writing on veterinary medicine and animal wellness. She founded Connect! Communications, a science-based marketing and communications company. Most recently, she worked as a science writer at Colorado State University before becoming director of communications at Morris Animal Foundation. Carol has two grown children and lives in Fort Collins, CO.
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George Bernard Shaw once famously said, “We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.” Keeping pets in play well into their golden years is the goal of every pet parent, and this edition of *fetch!* — our “Golden Oldies” issue — is dedicated to giving you all of the tricks, tools and technologies to do just that.

No matter how gracefully they grow old, pets’ minds and bodies inevitably change a little along the way. In the following pages, we’ll tell you what’s normal and when a trip to the vet is warranted (“The Challenge of the Golden Years: Recognizing Normal Changes Versus Subtle Symptoms,” page 28), explain changing barks and emerging odors (Ask Our Experts, page 46) and dish some tips for designing a diet that meets your aging friend’s nutritional needs (Chow Down, page 53).

Not all change needs to be feared, dear readers — in fact, “mixing it up” can often have health benefits for senior pets. Inside this issue you’ll learn the ABCs of teaching an old dog new tricks (Training 123s, page 32) and get ideas for novel treats and toys to try from our fetching list of product picks (We Heart This, page 36).

They say everything old is new again, and this is true in veterinary medicine, too. From old-world treatments that are coming back into fashion (“Oldies but Goodies,” page 44) to an exciting new spin on traditional radiation therapy (“A (Gamma) Ray of Hope,” page 48), veterinarians have more tools at their disposal than ever before. And thanks to a first-of-its-kind study tracking Golden Retrievers as they age, researchers are discovering new ways of understanding risk factors for disease (“Golden Opportunity,” page 39).

If there’s one thing our pets teach us, it’s that time flies when you’re having fun. In what feels like the blink of an eye, we’re celebrating an exciting anniversary here at *fetch!*. This is our 25th issue! It’s been our honor over the years to inform, educate and — we hope — delight you in these pages. May this issue keep everyone in the Petplan family, two- and four-legged alike, looking ever forward to a happy and healthy future together!

’Til next time,

**Chris, Natasha & Montgomery**
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letters to the editor

dear Petplan,

“Reading the most current issue of fetch! magazine, I saw some books discussed. (Surf and Turf, “Healthy Reads,” page 38). I wrote a book, Retrieval (Friesen Press), intended to help people who have suffered the loss of a beloved dog, which may be of interest to you. I also have written a weekly newspaper column since February 2001, so I can imagine the challenges of pulling together a solid magazine, let alone one that reads well, looks good and covers a variety of interesting topics. In my humble opinion, you do a superb job.”

Ron S. — Manhattan Beach, CA

editors’ response: Thanks for the barks and meows of praise, and for sending the book! Losing a best friend can be very hard indeed. Dr. Jules Benson has some advice on saying goodbye on page 56.

Got pet health questions, advice or comments to share?
Write to us at: petplantails@gopetplan.com
If fetch! prints your letter, you’ll get a free $25 Amex gift card.

write to us

Dear Petplan,

“My English Cocker Spaniel Oakley and I want you to know that we absolutely LOVE our fetch! magazine. Please keep up the good work. It is very informative.”

Kirsten L. — Erdenheim, PA

editors’ response: Thanks Kirsten — our tails are wagging like crazy! We hope you’ll enjoy our new helpful “hacks” on how to keep Oakley healthy on page 58.

“My dog Rocky tore his CCL, and when I found out how much I had to dish out, I was at a loss for words — I couldn’t believe surgery was going to cost $4,700. When we had the surgery, though, the vet educated me on pet insurance. I signed up wth Petplan right away, and I’ve been so impressed. I can rest assured now that my two dogs are in good hands! P.S. Thanks for the surprise magazine; I am really impressed! I used to run a magazine from the ground up, so well done!”

Ed T. — Santa Rosa, CA

editors’ response: We’re glad Rocky is back to his old tricks, and that we’ve got you covered! Meet four other pets who are good as gold after illness or injury on page 17.

Dear Petplan,

“Woofs! at the VET this morning @Petplan Look what we read?”

@SugarTheGoldenR

Dear Petplan,

“Reading the most current issue of fetch! magazine, I saw some books discussed. (Surf and Turf, “Healthy Reads,” page 38). I wrote a book, Retrieval (Friesen Press), intended to help people who have suffered the loss of a beloved dog, which may be of interest to you. I also have written a weekly newspaper column since February 2001, so I can imagine the challenges of pulling together a solid magazine, let alone one that reads well, looks good and covers a variety of interesting topics. In my humble opinion, you do a superb job.”

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Pet seizures can be scary, but UK veterinary researchers recently discovered one potential cause among older feline friends — as well as a promising treatment. FARS (Feline Audiogenic Reflex Seizures) is an epilepsy syndrome in which high-pitched sounds cause seizures. The crinkling of tin foil or a metal spoon dropping into a ceramic food bowl were reported as the most common culprits, but even a mobile phone ring and the sound of running water can trigger an episode. The average age of onset was found to be 15, and interestingly, Birman cats were overrepresented among sufferers, suggesting a possible breed link. The good mews? An epilepsy drug, levetiracetam, showed promise for alleviating symptoms, according to the study published in the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*.

**pot for pets?**

Well, not exactly. But as American laws and attitudes toward cannabis continue to temper, a wave of “pot-trepreneurs” is looking to make some green by treating sick and elderly pets. Manufacturers claim that the products, which have names like “Treatibles,” “Canna-Pet” and “Canna Companion,” won’t get Rover stoned because they’re derived from industrial hemp strains that lack the psychoactive ingredient tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). What they do contain is CBD (cannabidiol) and other non-psychoactive compounds, which proponents say offer natural relief from pain, inflammation and even anxiety. Given the lack of quality research, the jury is still out on those claims. As always, talk to your vet before beginning any new treatment.
the rub on muscle creams

With age comes wisdom — and all too often, aches and pains. But before reaching for a pain-relief cream, pet parents should purr-use the ingredients, especially if it was made by a compounding pharmacy. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration reports that several cats were sickened after exposure to flurbiprofen, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) sometimes used in custom-made preparations. The cream was never applied to the cats directly — it is strictly for human use — but even residual exposure can spell trouble (think kitty contact with skin, bed sheets, etc.). If you rub on relief, avoid exposing your pets, brush up on the signs of NSAID toxicity (lethargy, lack of appetite, vomiting, black or tarry stools) and be sure to keep cream containers safe from prying paws!

smoosh-faced ergo-NOM-ics

Pugs, Persians and pensioners, perk up! The Loving Bowl was built for brachycephalic best friends, but it’s also great for older pets with dental and jaw issues. Molded from food-grade ABS plastic, the bowl features a simple slope that flat-faced dogs and cats instinctively use to more easily access their food. The ergonomic design allows pets to eat and drink with their heads at a comfortable 45° angle, and its oversized shape helps keep food where it belongs. Want to make The Loving Bowl your pet’s bowl? Visit GoPetplan.com/LovingBowl and tell us about your furry friend’s favorite meal. Five winners will be selected on November 20 and announced in December.

capturing the lifelong spark

Photographer Amanda Jones has spent two decades documenting the magic of pets and pet parenthood. Over the years she has been a tremendous friend to Petplan, photographing staff and policyholders’ pets alike and preserving the memories of those we’ve lost. Her work has also appeared in the pages and on numerous covers of fetch! magazine. Jones’ latest project, a book entitled Dog Years: Faithful Friends, Then & Now, offers a heartwarming glimpse into the lives and stories of 30 best friends. Each subject is beautifully photographed in puppyhood and their golden years, appearing alongside reflections from two-legged loved ones about each dog’s unique spark of personality. In honor of fetch! magazine’s 25th issue, Petplan is giving away 25 signed copies of the book. Enter to win by visiting GoPetplan.com/DogYears and telling us about your pet’s unique, lifelong spark. Winners will be selected on November 20 and announced in December.
When it comes to golden rules for keeping furry friends fit, we’re your gold mine! In this edition’s Health Tips, we’re sharing advice for preventing pressure sores on incapacitated pets, diving into the waters of chronic renal failure and chatting candidly about veterinary hospice care. We’ve also got the dizzying details of vestibular disease and the skinny on how body size affects your pet’s lifespan.

by dr. kim smyth

taking the pressure off

Pressure sores are wounds that develop over particularly bony places of a pet’s body. When your pet lies in one position for an extended period of time, blood flow to the skin and underlying tissues is reduced. Without adequate blood supply, the tissues can die — resulting in pressure sores.

These sores are painful, prone to infection and notoriously hard to heal, so the best thing you can do is to take every measure to guard against them:

- Keep your pet clean and dry. If your pet can’t walk, he also can’t get up to urinate and defecate, which increases the chance of infection.
- Reposition your pet periodically. Turn him every four to six hours and help him with gentle range-of-motion exercises (if your vet approves).
- Consider getting a donut pillow or using special bandages for bony prominences. These provide extra padding right where your pet needs it most.

Pressure sores can be prevented, so talk to your vet if you’re caring for a pet who needs to be off her paws permanently or temporarily.
dazed and confused

Do you remember that woozy feeling you had as a kid after you just stepped off of a fast merry-go-round, or how dizzy you felt when you spun around with your forehead on a baseball bat and then tried to run a race? Well, that was your vestibular system hard at work.

The vestibular system is part of the inner ear, and its purpose is to tell the brain about the body’s orientation in space (whether it is standing up, riding on an elevator or falling, for instance). Older dogs (and sometimes cats) are prone to a dizziness condition called vestibular disease, and when it occurs, our poor furry friends feel like the room is spinning!

Vestibular disease can occur secondary to inner ear infections or a lesion in the brain, but older pets are more commonly affected by what veterinarians call “idiopathic vestibular disease,” or vestibular disease with no known underlying cause.

Dogs and cats with vestibular disease suffer incoordination, dizziness and nausea. Owners often think that their pet has had a stroke. Nystagmus, or eyes that flicker wildly back and forth, can be a tell-tale sign in pets with vestibular disease — look for it if your pet is suddenly unable to keep her balance. Most pets will also have a head tilt.

Fortunately, in most cases, symptoms resolve on their own within a few days. Nursing care to assist with meals may be needed while your pet recovers, and anti-nausea medications can help with the worst of the motion sickness. Plenty of TLC goes a long way here, and will help your disoriented patient find her way back to health!

body of evidence

Your pet may seem young at heart, but his age may tell a different story. While U.S. pet parents are technically considered senior citizens at 65, senior status in pets isn’t absolute. Whether your pet is ready for his “AARF” card or not has a lot more to do with his species, breed and size than with his actual age.

For mammals, large body size is often a good predictor of a long life — the average life span of a blue whale is 80 to 90 years, for instance. Unfortunately for four-legged family members, this size rule does not apply. Large breed dogs generally have shorter lifespans than smaller canines — scientists think they simply age faster than petite pups.

Breed can also impact your pet’s life span. For example, Boxers have a shorter life span than other breeds of the same size due to genetics, and Siamese cats and Standard Poodles live longer than similarly sized breeds!

Though there are exceptions to every rule, you can generally consider your dog eligible for senior status at:

- 6 years old for giant breeds (over 90 lbs)
- 7 years old for large breeds (51-90 lbs)
- 8 years old for medium breeds (21-50 lbs)
- 9 years old for small dogs (under 20 lbs)

The rules for cats are less complicated (for once!). The American Association of Feline Practitioners considers cats aged 7 to 10 years to be middle-aged, and 11 to 14+ senior.
Thanks to advances in veterinary medicine, our furry friends have access to superior diagnostic techniques and treatment options. But sometimes, despite our very best efforts, pets are diagnosed with terminal illnesses.

Even as recently as a decade ago, owners whose pets faced a terminal illness had limited options. Often, a terminal diagnosis meant immediate humane euthanasia. Today, more and more veterinarians are following the trend in human medicine of offering owners and their beloved pets veterinary hospice care: the option to remain at home during the last days of treatment.

So often, owners are blindsided in the exam room, and having to make an immediate decision regarding a pet’s life adds stress and guilt to an already heartbreaking time. Veterinary hospice can help alleviate these feelings by giving the entire family extra time together to prepare for the coming loss.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recognizes veterinary hospice as a growing field and your own vet hospital may have implemented the AVMA’s guidelines for hospice care, which include:

- keeping terminally ill patients free from pain and in a sanitary state
- ensuring regular contact between hospice care providers and pet owners
- discussing the severity of a terminally ill pet’s disease and his or her expected outcome
- making the pet owner’s responsibilities clear
- offering extended hours or referrals for after-hours care

Pet parents seeking veterinary hospice care have a variety of options. Keeping your pet at home with you during his final days can be a gift, but if the care required sounds like more than you can handle, palliative treatments can certainly be provided in your veterinarian’s office.

While hospice care can comfortably extend the lives of our four-legged family members, it’s not for everyone. Some key points to consider are:

**Cost.** Veterinarians who provide hospice care are virtually at your beck and call. In addition to services provided, home visits also factor travel time and expenses into the cost.

**Mental toll.** Caring for a terminally ill pet can be exhausting and emotionally overwhelming.

**Imminent death.** Your pet will die at home, either naturally or because the decision was made to go forward with humane euthanasia. Talk to your veterinarian (preferably at the start of your hospice journey) about final arrangements regarding your pet’s remains.

Veterinary hospice care is a beautiful option, and many find those final days or weeks to be the some of the most special times they share with their pet. If your pet is facing a terminal diagnosis, talk to your veterinarian about the hospice options available to you.
It is the kidney’s job to filter toxins from the blood, and each kidney contains thousands of microscopic filtration units called nephrons. Like all cells, nephrons have a finite lifespan. They cannot regenerate — your pets (and you) are born with an absolute number of nephrons, and once they’re gone, they’re gone.

Most pets have plenty of wiggle room in the nephron department — the kidneys function just fine even if they drop down to a fraction of healthy nephrons. In fact, it’s not until the kidneys are down to about a third of their filtering ability that signs of kidney disease occur.

Chronic renal failure, or chronic kidney disease, is common in older pets (especially cats). Kidneys filter out toxins and excrete them with water into the urine. When the kidneys start to slow down, they use more and more water to dilute the blood’s toxins. This leads to larger volumes of urine, which leads to increased thirst and water intake. Most pets with chronic kidney disease display increased thirst well before other symptoms emerge. Eventually, the kidneys will not be able to adequately do their job, and toxins begin building up in the bloodstream. These toxins (as well as chronic dehydration) lead to clinical signs like inappetence, nausea, vomiting, weight loss and constipation. If you notice any of these signs, schedule a visit with your veterinarian for blood work.

Your veterinarian may offer several things you can do at home to maintain or improve quality of life for a pet with chronic kidney disease, including:

- **water down**: Encourage your pet to drink more. For cats, this may mean leaving cups of water around the house or perhaps investing in a recirculating water fountain.

- **try a different diet**: Switch to canned food, which has higher water content, and ask your vet about a special prescription diet to ease the burden on the kidneys.

- **learn to administer fluids subcutaneously (under the skin)**: There will come a point when your pet simply cannot drink enough water to keep up with her losses, and administering fluids at home can help your pet avoid a hospital stay.

- **watch closely for signs of progression**: Pets with chronic kidney disease are at risk for dehydration, anemia, high blood pressure, blindness and severe electrolyte imbalances. Get in touch with your veterinarian right away if your pet develops new symptoms.
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Accidents and illnesses know no age — they can happen to any unsuspecting companion. But with a helping paw from pet insurance, our furry friends can live well into their golden years no matter what life tosses their way. On the following pages, you’ll meet a Newfoundland who goes for gold, a star-crossed Goldendoodle who can’t catch a break, a Boxer with everlasting enthusiasm and a rascally feline who had a near miss.

Four tales of fur-ever friends who gold-medaled in health thanks to Petplan
molly
8-year-old boxer

Her face may be gray, but Molly is forever young at heart. Even on a laid-back trip to the beach, she insisted on playing fetch with seashells, leaping in the waves and bouncing off of mom Marissa. After one wiggly leap, Molly landed with a yelp and limped off. “I knew right away it was her CCL,” says Marissa, a member of Petplan’s Vet Services team.

After a few months of vet-ordered rest, Molly’s limp persisted. She needed surgery — and lots of down time — to repair the tear. She was apprehensive at first to use her fixed leg, but the youthful Boxer learned to bounce again after weeks of laser therapy, hydrotherapy and rehab exercises at home. “It’s hard work,” says Marissa, “but she’s healed beautifully.”

lives in west chester, pa
unexpected tail $4,120 for treatment of a cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) tear
aurora
11-year-old siamese mix

Aurora is every bit as bold as she is beautiful. “Little White” is the ringleader of mischief to her four feline siblings. “If our bedroom door is shut, she’ll literally use her head to get it open,” says mom Cathy. “Then our other cats go in and drag everything around.”

But mischief also tends to find Aurora in the form of health cat-astrophes, including a kidney infection that she almost didn’t recover from. After several trips to a number of vets, who all recommended euthanasia, Aurora pulled through as if nothing ever happened. “She’s definitely down a few of her nine lives,” Cathy says, “but that doesn’t stop her from finding trouble.”

lives in glassboro, nj
unexpected tail $1,200 for treatment of a kidney infection
Bronte
3-year-old newfoundland

Bronte shines wherever she goes. From the show ring to the hospitals where she does therapy work, this golden girl lights up many lives. Though a couch potato with simple tastes (her favorite toy is a water bottle!), she's so focused on her job that an injured paw couldn't stop her from spreading smiles.

A few months before competing in the Westminster Kennel Club dog show, parents (and veterinarians) Erin and John noticed some lameness and found a blister-like sore between her toes. “The sore went away with antibiotics,” recalls Erin, “but came back weeks later. Something still wasn’t right.” An ultrasound revealed a piece of glass embedded in her paw, and it was removed just in time for Westminster. “She never missed a beat!” says Erin.
Some pets have all the luck, and then there’s Chili. His luckless streak kicked off with a UTI when he was just a pup, but (paws crossed), that’s all water under the bridge. A typical Goldendoodle — with the cleverness of the Poodle and the appetite of the Golden Retriever — Chili once sniffed out mom Lisa’s engagement ring and swallowed it (which she later retrieved the unpleasant way).

As he matured, Chili developed painful polyarthritis. But just as soon as he bounced back, he stepped on a bee and the limping returned. Even when all is good as gold, dad Roger is ready for the next unfortunate event thanks to Petplan. “By having pet insurance, you’re ahead of the game if you have a problem,” he says.
Petplanthropy: For all the joy pets bring to our lives, they deserve the very best in return. That’s why Petplan created a charitable paw: Petplanthropy! From sniffing out organizations (often local) that improve animals’ lives to rallying our two-legged team to lend paws-on support, Petplanthropy is all about pawsing it forward. Peruse this page (and dog-ear it in future issues!) to learn more and get involved!

Protect.Cure.Love, for pet cancer research This May, Petplan joined paws with The Animal Rescue Site to sponsor their Protect.Cure.Love campaign in honor of Pet Cancer Awareness Month. Petplan matched donations to the campaign dollar for dollar, up to $10,000, to help fund pet cancer research. About 6 million new cancer diagnoses are made in cats and dogs each year, according to the Animal Cancer Foundation, but new treatments and research can give affected pets and their families a brighter outlook. Learn more at www.theanimalrescuesite.com.

Petplan’s Mucky Mutts get muddy for MS Team Mucky Mutts got down and dirty on Saturday, May 30, at the 2015 MuckFest MS: Philadelphia 5K mud run — all for a good cause! A pack of Petplan runners worked paw-in-paw through muddy terrain and mucky obstacles in support of the National Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society. The Mucky Mutts raised more than $20,000, surpassing last year’s total and making Petplan the top fundraiser in the Philadelphia area.

A portion of funds raised will go to Canine Partners for Life to help provide MS patients with service dogs like Brindy, who helps mom Linda by retrieving objects, opening and closing doors and helping Linda pull her socks off. After living with MS for 26 years, Linda says Brindy gives her the confidence to get on her feet, and provides more natural stability than a walking cane.

Our team is extremely grateful for all the donations that helped make this possible — and we hope to raise even more money next year!

The numbers are in!

See what a difference a few paws can make?

❤ 67
Petplan employees who overcame the obstacles in 2015 MuckFest MS: Philadelphia.

❤ $10,000
Amount donated to the Protect.Cure.Love. campaign.

❤ $20,871
Total Petplan’s team raised for MuckFest.

2016 Vet Awards are already making a difference What could be better than honoring pet health heroes? Doing it while helping pets in need! For every nomination submitted for the 2016 Veterinary Awards, Petplan will donate $1 to one of three pet-focused charities: Adopt-a-Pet.com, GreaterGood.org or Morris Animal Foundation. Visit www.gopetplan.com/vet-awards to learn more.
osteoarthritis
the out of joint edition

by dr. kim smyth
osteoarthritis: close to the bone

If your older pet is slowing down, age may not be entirely to blame. Joint disease can occur for many reasons, but the most common kind is a degenerative condition called osteoarthritis.

In a normal joint, two bones meet and are held together by ligaments and other soft tissues. The bones themselves are covered in a layer of cartilage, which serves to protect and cushion the bones. When osteoarthritis occurs, degeneration of cartilage in the bones of the joint leads to bone-on-bone contact, which can be painful for pets.

signs + symptoms

Joint pain and stiffness related to osteoarthritis manifest differently in dogs and cats, and cat owners should pay particular attention to their feline friend’s movements, as cats tend to mask their pain, making signs of osteoarthritis subtle.

Dogs:
- intermittent lameness, especially after exercise
- exercise intolerance
- trouble rising, especially in the morning
- reluctance to perform some activities, such as jumping into the car or off of the bed
- excessive licking of the genitals

Cats:
- accidents outside of the litter box (pain can prevent your cat from stepping over the litter box walls)
- poor grooming; unkempt appearance
- a change in jumping behavior, like a reluctance to or the inability to jump down

Your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical exam, assessing your pet’s joints for pain, thickening and decreased range of motion. Radiographs (or X-rays) may show bony changes, fluid around the joint and thickened joints.

Kona's love of life took a debilitating turn when his joints started to show their age. Try as he might, he struggled to get out of bed in the morning, and daily walks were nothing to be excited about. His vet diagnosed osteoarthritis, but because of some other health issues, Kona’s system couldn’t handle many of the common arthritis medications. Wanting to keep Kona comfortable, mom Alison opted for acupuncture — and it’s made all the difference. “The change has been phenomenal,” she says. “His energy is back and his quality of life has really improved.”
treatment

Osteoarthritis is a progressive, irreversible condition in dogs and cats. There is no cure, but symptoms can be managed to provide pets with a very good, comfortable quality of life. Treatment of osteoarthritis is multi-modal, meaning that your veterinarian will approach the disease and its symptoms from many angles.

**Weight control/exercise:** Many older pets are overweight, which increases joint stress. Controlled exercise and dietary control under the guidance of your veterinarian maintains muscle mass and encourages a healthy weight.

**Physical therapy:** While we often think of physical therapy just for pets who are post-operative or post-injury, physical therapy does wonders for arthritic pets, too.

**Dietary supplements:** Omega-3 fatty acids (DHA and EPA) and antioxidants reduce inflammation, which is one of the hallmarks of osteoarthritis. Prescription diets for joint disease are available from your veterinarian.

**Chondroprotectants:** These substances can decrease the breakdown of cartilage and encourage cartilage synthesis. Glucosamine, chondroitin, and the injectable product Adequan® all fall into this category.

**Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs):** Medications like RIMADYL® (carprofen), Deramaxx (deracoxib), and Metacam® (meloxicam) are used to decrease inflammation and pain in pets free from liver and kidney problems.

**Adjunctive treatment:** This includes alternative therapies like acupuncture, cold laser therapy and stem cell therapy. It also includes adjunctive analgesia such as morphine-like medications and medications to treat neuropathic pain.

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**case study**

15-year-old male domestic longhair

**condition:**
osteoa5rhritis

**treatment:**
acupuncture and supplements

**amount reimbursed:** $563

**petplan protected:**
since July 2009

Oscar is a seasoned leaping pro, so it was a surprise when a routine senior wellness exam uncovered osteoarthritis. Proactive pet parent Harold was all about staying ahead of the signs, warding off aches and pains with glucosamine supplements and giving Oscar a leg up with steps and ramps to his favorite perches. “It’s important to keep him at a healthy weight, too,” says Harold. “I measure his portions and stay away from free feeding.” Every now and then, Oscar struggles to bound as high as he once could, but massage and acupuncture help him find his frisk.
The prognosis for pets with osteoarthritis is different for every pet because the disease progression varies among individuals. The goal of therapy is to ensure a good quality of life. It may not be realistic to expect your pet to be 100% pain-free, but with multi-modal treatment, pets with osteoarthritis can enjoy a happy life.

Maintain an open line of communication with your veterinarian throughout your pet’s treatment, and check in often. Remember, you are your pet’s best advocate!

Though osteoarthritis is more commonly associated with older dogs, cats are just as likely to develop the disease as they age. In fact, about 90% of cats at 12 have bony changes on X-rays that are consistent with osteoarthritis. However, radiographic changes do not always correlate with clinical disease. For instance, pets with significant signs of joint disease on X-rays show few symptoms of pain, while for others, the reverse is true.

If your pet is showing signs of joint pain or intermittent lameness, don’t just assume it is arthritis and call it a day. Other conditions can cause lameness, from ligament injury to intervertebral disk disease to bone cancer. Your veterinarian is the best person to provide a definitive diagnosis.

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**NexGard (afoxolaner) Chewables**

**Dosage and Administration:**

NexGard can be administered with or without food. Care should be taken that the dog consumes the complete dose, and the animal should be observed for a few minutes to ensure that the dose is not lost or refused. If it is suspected that any dose of the drug has been lost or if vomiting occurs within two hours of administration, notice with another full dose. If a dose is missed, administer NexGard and renew a monthly dose schedule.

Use Treatment of Infection:

Treatment with NexGard may begin at any time of the year in areas where fleas are common year-round. Monthly treatment with NexGard should continue throughout the year. To minimize the likelihood of flea reinfestation, it is important to treat all animals within a household with an approved flea control product.

Treatment with NexGard may begin at any time of the year (see Effectiveness).

**Contraindications:**

None are known for the use of NexGard.

**Warnings:**

- Not for use in horses. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. In case of accidental ingestion, contact a physician immediately.

**Precautions:**

The use of NexGard in breeding programs or breeding dogs has not been evaluated. Use with caution in dogs with a history of seizures (see Adverse Reactions).

**Adverse Reactions:**

In a well-controlled US field study, which included a total of 333 houses and 615 treated dogs, the drug was reported in 290 administration (active control) no adverse reactions were observed with NexGard.

Over the 90-day study period, all observations of potential adverse reactions were recorded. The most frequent reactions reported at an incidence of ≥ 1% within any of the three months of observation were vomiting and diarrhea. In the following table, the most important adverse reaction observed during the study was vomiting. The occurrence of vomiting was generally self-limiting and of short duration and tended to decrease with subsequent doses in both groups. Five treated dogs experienced anorexia during the study, and two of these dogs experienced anorexia with the first dose but not subsequent doses.

**Effectiveness:**

In a well-controlled laboratory study, NexGard began to kill fleas four hours after initial administration and demonstrated ≥93% effectiveness at eight hours. In a separate well-controlled laboratory study, NexGard demonstrated ≥93% effectiveness against adult flea (24 hours post-treatment) for 25 days.

In a well-controlled US field study, NexGard was ≥93% effective at 12 hours post-treatment. Dogs in the treated and control groups were infested with >200 fleas at 12 and 24 hours post-treatment (≥1 eggs and ≥17 eggs in the NexGard treated group and ≥16 eggs and ≥15 eggs in the control group. NexGard and control, respectively). At an end-point examination, none of the fleas in the treated group were capable of maturation compared with the control group fleas.

Collectively, the data from these three trials (two laboratories and one field) demonstrate that NexGard kills fleas before they lay eggs, thereby preventing subsequent flea infestations after the start of treatment of existing flea infestations.

**Storability:**

NexGard is available in four sizes of beef-flavored soft chewables: 11.3, 28.3, 68 or 136 mg afoxolaner. NexGard is available in color-coded packages of 1, 3, or 60 flavored chewables. NASA 151-35 and Approved by FDA.

**Marketed by:**

Frontline Veterinary LLC a division of Merial, Inc.

Duvall, WA 98019-9424 USA

Made in Brazil.

**Expiration:**

Storage Information:

Store at or below 30°C (86°F) with excursions permitted up to 40°C (104°F). Storage Information:

Store at or below 30°C (86°F) with excursions permitted up to 40°C (104°F).

**Mode of Action:**

A selective and reversible antagonist of the insect and acarine γ-aminobutyric acid (GABA) receptors. Afoxolaner is a non-competitive antagonist at the GABA(A) receptor, thereby blocking pre- and post-synaptic transfer of chloride ions in insects and acarines.

**References:**


Chew on this
fleas & ticks

NexGard® from the makers of FRONTLINE® Plus. The only soft, beef-flavored chew for dogs that kills both fleas and ticks.

And it keeps killing for a full 30 days. Fleas and ticks hate it. Vets recommend it. And dogs, well, they’re begging for it.

For more information, ask your vet or visit NexGardForDogs.com.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION
NexGard is for use in dogs only. The most frequently reported adverse reactions include vomiting, dry/flaky skin, diarrhea, lethargy, and lack of appetite. The safe use of NexGard in pregnant, breeding or lactating dogs has not been evaluated. Use with caution in dogs with a history of seizures.

1. Data on file at Merial.
2. Data on file at Merial.
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Bella waddled into my exam room and gingerly lowered herself onto the floor. The 12-year-old Lab gave me a polite glance through cloudy eyes framed by a silver muzzle before perching her head on her paws. A quick thump of her thinning tail signaled she was ready for her exam.

I asked Bella’s mom how her dog was doing. “Oh, she’s getting older, like the rest of us.” A nervous laugh and broken eye contact suggested perhaps both owner and pet weren’t feeling as spry as they’d prefer. “I guess you could say she’s doing fine for her age.” That innocent comment, made over 20 years ago, permanently changed the way I approached aging in my pet patients.

What does “fine for her age” really mean? How can we tell the difference between the normal, unavoidable consequences of the accumulation of years and warnings of disease? Can we extend life expectancy while compressing disease and pain? How could I help patients like Bella healthily age? Answering those questions became central to my journey as a veterinarian and purveyor of preventive medicine.
The most common question about older pets I’m asked is whether or not a symptom, behavior or change is normal. Because our pets can’t talk, solving these dilemmas requires a thorough medical history, veterinary examination and diagnostic tests. The best advice I can offer is if something is bugging you about your pet, ask your veterinarian if it’s normal. Some of these things, for example, often are not:

**SLOWING DOWN**: Most pet parents wrongly blame age as the reason for “slowing down,” decreased activity and occasional limping. A date on a calendar can’t cause joint pain, weakness or discomfort. If your senior dog or cat isn’t as sprightly and energetic, or periodically experiences a hitch in her step, have her examined. Most cases of “slowing down” are the result of joint disease or injury. Knees, hips, spine, shoulders and elbows are typically involved. Pet owners are amazed when their “old” dog or cat springs to life following treatment of a joint condition. Remedies range from supplements, weight loss and prescription drugs to acupuncture, class IV laser therapy and joint replacement surgery.

**FEAR AND AGGRESSION**: Some pets develop behavioral changes as they age. A dog that never feared thunderstorms may suddenly quiver at the sight of rainclouds. A cat that loved lounging on your lap may begin swatting at every passing hand. A previously friendly pet may flee in fear or unexpectedly lunge at guests. Sudden behavioral changes in older pets need to be addressed swiftly and aggressively to prevent escalation and improve the odds of correction. The first step is to rule out a hidden medical condition such as brain disease, hormonal imbalance or pain as the origin. Once illness has been excluded, behavioral modification under veterinary supervision begins. It’s critical to use positive reinforcement techniques in senior pets; dominance or fear-based tactics will only exacerbate the problem. Modern medications, supplements and advanced teaching techniques allow for better results than ever before. The truth is many older pets can learn new tricks, including re-learning good manners. If you notice even minor changes in your pet’s attitude, talk with your vet for help.

**MENTAL DULLNESS**: Many pet owners tell me their golden oldie “is sluggish,” “doesn’t act as sharp,” “lacks interest in playing” or “is sleeping more” — these and other complaints are associated with diminished mental or sensory abilities. They often hint at an underlying medical condition, not a normal element of age. Decreased vision from cataracts, hearing loss, pain, changes in

If your senior dog or cat isn’t as sprightly and energetic, or periodically experiences a hitch in her step, have her examined.
taste or aromatic preference and dementia, especially cognitive dysfunction syndrome (CDS) in dogs, can contribute to these changes. I’ll also test for diseases such as hypothyroidism, Cushing’s disease, hypertension and heart disease as possible culprits of “mental dullness.” Treatment options include innovative prescription medications, novel nutritional supplements, medicinal herbs and surgical corrections. Perhaps the most important aspect of healthy aging is maintaining mental and sensory function; modern medicine is available to help sharpen your pet’s mental edge.

**Loss of Housetraining:** Previously housebroken dogs and litterbox-trained cats that begin having “accidents” in the house are a challenge. After nearly 25 years of clinical practice, I can tell you unequivocally the majority of these house-soiling situations are due to a medical problem. Bladder infections and stones, kidney disease, diabetes and tumors top the list of triggers. Painful arthritic joints that make climbing into a litterbox excruciating or climbing stairs to go outside are also primary suspects. Dogs that begin to both urinate and defecate indoors should be evaluated for CDS. Don’t let your pet’s “accidents” be their last act. Most pets will resume normal bathroom duties after diagnosis and treatment.

Many cancers are diagnosed too late simply because the pet parent failed to recognize the severity of the situation. Err on the side of caution with senior pets and see your vet sooner.

**Top Golden Oldies Diseases**

With advanced age comes increased disease risk. This is due to a wide variety of factors, most of them involving the accumulation of cellular damage, chronic inflammation and genetics. If your pet is in the over-7 set (the age at which most are considered seniors), here are some conditions you need to know about and look for:

**Cancer:** Without a doubt, cancer is the biggest threat to older dogs and cats. If you observe any lumps or bumps, discolored skin or changes in your pet’s anatomy, contact your veterinarian. Internal tumors can be harder to spot. Any changes in attitude, appetite or abilities should be reported to your vet. Many cancers are diagnosed too late simply because the pet parent failed to recognize the severity of the situation. There are numerous cancer treatment options available today with high success rates and low side effects. Err on the side of caution with senior pets and see your vet sooner.
**Arthritis**: Older dogs and cats have more joint disease. Most cases of crippling arthritis are due to excess weight and injury. Genetics play a role in certain breeds such as Labradors, shepherds, Maine Coons and Persians. Not all arthritis looks like limping. Difficulty climbing stairs, getting into cars or hopping onto couches or counters can be signs of joint disease in pets, as can house soiling.

**Kidney Disease**: Kidney disease is common in senior cats and dogs. Diagnosed early, diet changes and medications can prolong longevity and preserve quality of life. Common signs are increased water consumption and urination, weight loss and vomiting. Kidney disease starts subtly; watch for any changes and seek help early.

**Oral Disease**: Periodontal disease, tartar and calculus, and plain old bad teeth are frequently a problem in senior pets. In addition to being unsightly and causing bad breath, oral disease can lead to trouble eating, tooth loss and damage to the jaw and nasal sinuses. Because oral tumors can be difficult to detect at home, your pet’s mouth should be examined twice a year by your vet to diagnose any problems. Tooth and gum cleanings, extractions and other dental procedures and products can help keep your older pet’s mouth healthy.

**Cataracts**: Cloudy eyes are commonly caused by cataracts or a more benign condition called nuclear sclerosis. It’s important your vet determines which is to blame because the prognosis and treatment varies accordingly. Twenty years ago cataracts sentenced a pet to blindness; today, a simple outpatient procedure can restore sight. Nuclear sclerosis often requires no intervention and may not cause any visual deficits.

**Diabetes**: Older, heavier pets, especially cats, are particularly prone to developing type 2 diabetes. Common clinical signs include increased thirst and urination, weight loss, vomiting and changes in eating habits. Your older pet should be screened at least yearly for diabetes, and more frequently if carrying a few extra pounds.

**High Blood Pressure**: Hypertension isn’t always thought of as a senior dog or cat disease, but it should be. High blood pressure is more common than you’d guess in older pets and can lead to kidney failure, blindness and brain damage. A simple annual measurement similar to human blood pressure monitoring is all it takes to make sure your pet’s blood is pumping at healthy pressures.

**Obesity**: As our pets age they often become portly. Excess fat increases inflammation throughout the body, potentially leading to conditions such as cancer, joint damage, decreased immune function and decreased longevity. High blood pressure, diabetes, respiratory and kidney disease are also related to extra pounds. If you want pets to live as long and healthily as possible, keep them fit and lean.

**Aging is not a disease; it’s normal. Healthy aging is graceful and beautiful. You can help your pets enjoy life to the fullest by feeding them well, getting plenty of exercise and taking care of subtle problems before they become significant. Here’s to more colorful golden years!** 🍂
Just because older pets have “calmed down” doesn’t mean they don’t need stimulation anymore. Try these simple tips to keep a senior dog mentally fit and acting like a puppy well into his twilight years.

1. SNIFF OUT A NEW SPORT

**for spry guys:** Try activities such as K9 Nose Work® or Barn Hunt — both engage your dog’s sense of smell and instinct to explore. Nose Work (www.k9nosework.com) teaches your dog to identify and locate a variety of scents. Barn Hunt (www.barnhunt.com) takes your dog’s natural instincts to a new level by having him track a live rodent (who is protected by an enclosure) through an obstacle course. While any dog can play — at any age! — terriers and hounds think these games are the pick of the litter.

**for the teacher’s pet:** Try Rally Obedience, a low-impact obedience obstacle course perfect for pooches who were the star of puppy class back in the day. Rally Obedience is an AKC-accredited sport, and there’s plenty of information and resources to get started at www.akc.org/events/rally.

**for the snuggle hound:** Train to become a Therapy Dog ambassador. Volunteering at a local senior center or hospital is a fun way to give back while creating new experiences for your best friend. Many local trainers offer guidance on how to become a Therapy Dog volunteer team — find one at www.tdi-dog.org.

2. LEARN A FEW TRICKS

If your dog has a physical condition that prevents him from being as active as he once was, trick training can be a fun alternative to exercise. Clicker training, a positive-reinforcement method that teaches dogs to associate a “click” noise with praise or treats, is especially great for building critical thinking skills, frustration tolerance and creativity in your dog.

**get clicking:** To get started, you just need a small hand-held clicker and some of your dog’s favorite treats. Start with a simple and low-impact task, like having your dog touch his nose to a target (like your hand) or asking him to hold eye contact with you for longer and longer periods of time.

**tips for training:** For full direction and inspiration, including instructional videos, check out www.clickertraining.com.
MAKE A NEW FRIEND

A young dog can make a senior dog act like a puppy again. But before you rush off to adopt a new friend, make sure the whole family is ready to take on the commitment.

**test the waters:** For your senior dog, that may mean arranging play sessions with different puppies to make sure he’s up to it, and to ensure he won’t play so hard he hurts himself in the process. Don’t know anyone with a pup? Join a positive reinforcement obedience class for some controlled socialization with friendly dogs and their owners.

**allow breathing space:** If you do end up with a new pup, make sure your senior dog has his own space to take a break from the rowdiness as needed. Also, make sure that your new dog has his own bowls, bed and toys so he’s not stealing your senior dog’s favorite stuff!

OLD DOGS, NEW Routines

Life changes like moving, having a baby or taking on new hours at work can be stressful for a dog of any age, especially set-in-their-ways seniors. Try these tips to ease the transition:

**KEEP THE COMFORTS OF HOME**

If your dog has had the same bed for years or prefers a treasured toy, resist the urge to purge — let him keep it with him in times of stress. Introduce new things once your dog has had time to adapt to his new lifestyle. Dogs can exhibit anxiety immediately after a big change, but after about two weeks, he should start to settle. If your dog continues to be stressed, call your vet or a certified trainer.

**Keep routines consistent**

Big changes can make it difficult to stick to a schedule. But dogs thrive on routine, and they have unbelievable internal clocks. (Need proof? Come to my house and watch my dogs anxiously anticipating their 5 o’clock dinner time!) While you may think that skipping a walk doesn’t hurt anyone, a disruption in the routine can cause major stress to your best friend. Can’t commit to staying on schedule? It may be time to hire a dog walker.

**SCHEDULE ONE-ON-ONE TIME**

They may not be as demanding of your time as a puppy, but senior dogs still need you! Take a few minutes to go for an extra walk, sneak in a training session or just sit with them while they enjoy a treat. If you’ve just gone through a major life change, chances are you might be equally stressed — and canine cuddles are as good for you as they are for Fido!
As in humans, a cataract refers to a clouding of the lens of the eye. Many breeds have a genetic predisposition to juvenile cataracts, i.e., occurring in young animals. These cataracts can occur as early as 6 months of age and progress to complete loss of vision by 2 years old. The good news is that most affected pets can be successfully treated with surgery.

**Surgical correction and follow-up care:** from $3,000 per lens

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**Deafness**

Inherited deafness in one or both ears occurs due to the degeneration of the structures of the inner ear. It usually occurs within the first few weeks of life. Inherited deafness is permanent and cannot be cured.

No treatment, but many deaf pets thrive with proper training

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**Beagle**

The humble Beagle has regal roots in 13th-century England, where a pack of pint-sized “Glove Beagles” ruled alongside Edward II. Aristocrats later kept packs of them for tracking hare (or “beagling”) and brought them stateside in the mid-1800s. This sturdy scent hound has counted among America’s most popular breeds ever since — even winning Westminster Kennel Club gold as 2008’s and 2015’s “Best in Show”!

Today, the Beagle is celebrated as much for his hunting heritage as his family-friendliness. Small-statured at 13-16” and 20-25 lbs., he possesses a merry disposition and is patient and gentle with children. His short hair coat is low-maintenance, but as a true pack animal, he craves the companionship of people and other dogs. This chowhound does require vigorous exercise to keep his waistline and wanderlust in check. Microchipping is strongly recommended, and a quality leash is a must — because while Beagles can be trained, that may not matter once they have picked up a scent!

The Petplan Healthometer measures how healthy a particular breed is in relation to other breeds.

1 = Healthiest

10 = Least Healthy

For more details on these and other hereditary conditions, visit gopetplan.com/condition-check
With intervertebral disc disease (IVDD), one or more of the discs that sit between vertebrae break down and their extruded contents bulge into the vertebral canal, pressing on the spinal cord. Symptoms range from mild back or neck pain to paralysis of the limbs. Mild IVDD can be managed medically, but severe IVDD cases require surgery to provide relief. Costs vary depending on severity and treatment protocol: from $500+. 

Demodex canis mites live on all healthy dogs. In the vast majority of cases they never cause a problem. However, Beagles and some other breeds can pass on an immune system defect to their offspring that can result in a generalized proliferation of Demodex mites. The most common signs of demodectic mange are hair loss, scaling and irritation of the affected skin. Cost of treatment: $500 to $5,000+ for incurable cases.

Pulmonic stenosis is an obstruction of blood flow from the right ventricle of the heart to the pulmonary artery, forcing the heart to work harder to pump blood to the lungs. Severe valve thickening can cause thickening of the heart muscle and lead to congestive heart failure. Both medical management and surgical treatment options exist. Surgical correction: $5,000 to $10,000.
We love anything that helps keep your pet healthy. But these things we love.

**cub rub**
tame your little lion with this soothing massager that stimulates glands in kitty’s face, back and paws

catt design senses massage center, $9.59, catwhispererproducts.com

**rolled gold**
stuff-able, durable and adorable, these bouncy balls are fun to fetch, chew and roll

planet dog orbee-tuff® nooks,™ $10.95, dogtuff.com

**comfort food**
an ergonomic design (and fun candy colors!) makes food from this feeder easy for pets to digest

the loving bowl, $29.99, sniffery.com

**licorice twist**
perk up your pup’s pearly whites with anise and green tea treats that help clean teeth

in clover® grin™ dental dog treats, $7.99-$11.18, petco.com

**we love this.**
We like anything that helps keep your pet healthy. But these things we love.
(old) school ties
the classic bow gets a thoroughly modern makeover on these handsome, handcrafted collars

bow tie dog collar, $42, pecanpiepuppies.com

fur-ever young
help kitty slow aging with a pinch of this proprietary blend of herbs and vitamins
golden years supplement for cats, $10.95, drharveys.com

aesop’s labels
this mint and citrus cleanser from swanky skincare company aesop is specially formulated for pampered pets

aesop® animal shampoo, $39, aesop.com

on the dot
gold polkas and a fleece top make this luxurious lounger fit for a furry king

kess original “scattered gold” metallic dog bed, $125, kessinhouse.com
Back on Track’s Therapeutic Travel Bed

Back on Track’s unique therapeutic Welltex® fabric provides, all-natural soothing warmth that may help relax your dog’s muscles and relieve joint pain. Travel Bed now available in convenient travel size with non-slip backing; machine washable with it’s own carrying case!

In USA:  
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Email: info@backontrackproducts.com

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Email: canada@backontrack.com

used by veterinarians to treat and relieve muscle and joint pain.
golden OPPORTUNITY

golden retriever research could help improve the lives of all pets

BY CAROL BORCHERT
Kristi Fiala’s true love was being a therapy dog team with her Golden Retriever, Gracie. Once or twice a week, the pair would visit first-grade students at Horizon Elementary School in Johnston, IA. The children practiced reading to Gracie to help build their confidence; she didn’t care if they pronounced a word wrong, she simply listened and made happy noises. Over the years, Gracie made 435 school visits, reaching more than 500 students.

“Kristi also enjoyed doing therapy work with her two other Goldens, Jack and Cody. But tragedy hit home last April when she lost Jack — and less than a month later, Gracie — to hemangiosarcoma, a cancer of the blood vessels. Kristi and her husband Chris couldn’t believe they’d lost both dogs so close together and so quickly. They were in shock.

“When we got Cody, our breeder told me about the Morris Animal Foundation Golden Retriever Lifetime Study and encouraged me to sign him up,” says Fiala. “Our first Golden, Maggie, also died of hemangiosarcoma. Because of her, I thought maybe this was something we could get involved with to increase the health and longevity of not just Goldens, but all dogs.”

Cody, who enrolled as number 2,054 of the 3,000-dog study, now participates in memory of the three Golden Retrievers his family lost.

“We all want our dogs to live long, healthy lives,” said Fiala. “I hope the study helps us figure out how to do that.”

**THE GOLDEN RETRIEVER LIFETIME STUDY RECORDS DOGS OVER THE COURSE OF THEIR ENTIRE LIVES.**

Morris Animal Foundation’s Golden Retriever Lifetime Study records lifestyle details and collects biological samples from test dogs over the course of their entire lives, helping to reveal health problems that can take many years to evolve. While common in human medical research, these “longitudinal studies” have not been done before in veterinary medicine. The goal of the study is to unravel mysteries surrounding the causes of disease and reveal clues to good health that may help our dogs live longer.

To collect the data researchers need on 3,000 dogs throughout their lives, owners and veterinarians to fill out a 72-page questionnaire each year, covering everything from water bowls, food choices, supplements and snacks, to exercise, sleep and much, much more. Hair, nail and other samples are collected each year, and every veterinary visit due to accidents and illness — as well as any treatment — is noted in detail.
As the years go by, the study should reveal factors that increase the risk for diseases such as cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, arthritis and other common ailments, as well as provide researchers with insight into how to keep dogs healthier as they age.

“Old age is not a disease, but we do have some defined health issues that happen with older dogs, primarily cardiac, musculoskeletal and dental,” said David Haworth, DVM, PhD, and President/CEO of Morris Animal Foundation. “There are also some interesting questions around whether the immune system functions as well in older dogs as in dogs in the prime of life.”

Dr. Haworth says the study will allow researchers to see the risk factors for common diseases of older dogs — ones that are suspected but unproven, as well as risk factors that are currently unknown.

“When a dog develops a cardiac murmur that is more progressed than the rest of the study population, we can ask what made that dog different. Is it genetics? Exposure to rat poison? What made the difference?” says Dr. Haworth.

“The same thing applies with arthritis,” he continues. “We’ll be able to see if something like food supplementation really has an impact on a population scale. An owner has their personal experience, while we are comparing large populations to build a scientific case.”

**Nature and Nurture**

The Golden Retriever Lifetime Study may help researchers better understand disease processes by providing clues to when those processes begin, what mediating factors were in play and if early intervention helped prevent chronic conditions, such as osteoarthritis, from worsening. The study will also help researchers understand to what degree lifestyle choices like maintaining a healthy weight and regular exercise can help prevent or slow down the progression of disease.

“Osteoarthritis affects 20 to 30 percent of the adult dog population, and the long-term accompanying pain can be difficult to treat,” said David Knazovicky, DVM, PhD, from Comparative Pain Research Laboratory, North Carolina State University, a Morris Animal Foundation research fellow working under the mentorship of Dr. Duncan Lascelles.

“The difficulty we have in effectively treating this long-term pain is possibly because of central sensitization, a neurological process that intensifies pain. Understanding when central sensitization is present will help us understand what factors contribute to it, and so inform us about how we might prevent it. Ultimately, we want to keep our beloved canine companions happy, active and living life to the fullest.”

“We all want our dogs to live long, healthy lives. I hope the study helps us figure out how to do that.”
Beyond learning more about arthritis, Dr. Haworth is particularly intrigued by what the study will reveal about the impact of dental hygiene and regular, professional dental care for dogs. By the time they are 3 years old, 85 percent of dogs have some degree of periodontal disease. Just 3 percent of dog owners brush their dog’s teeth and of those, only half do so effectively.

“If you take the periodontium, the tissue that surrounds and supports the teeth, and stretched it out flat, it would be roughly the size of your dog’s back,” Dr. Haworth says. “Now, imagine the entire back of your dog inflamed and infected. Chronic inflammation can lead to all sorts of bad things, and we’ll be able to better understand what that means for our dogs and their health as they age.”

Some of the study dogs are getting annual professional dental care. Some owners are brushing their dogs’ teeth at home. Dr. Haworth hopes to figure out whether those dogs will live longer, or if their golden years will be healthier.

The Tooth of the Matter

While Golden Retrievers were the breed selected for the study, the knowledge Morris Animal Foundation gathers can be applied to all dog breeds. In time, researchers may better understand health risks for other animals — and even people. The hope of everyone involved — from the study’s scientists to its participants — is that new and promising discoveries will help them bring about a world in which animals can lead their healthiest lives. Many questions are being asked, but thankfully families like the Fialas have stepped up to be part of the answer.

For more information on studies founded by Morris Animal Foundation, visit MorrisAnimalFoundation.org.

The Chance of a Lifetime

Super Antioxidant Supplement for Dogs

Wild Krill Oil from the Antarctic Ocean

√ Up to EIGHT times more ASTAXANTHIN than krill oil for humans
√ Astaxanthin is an extremely powerful ANTIOXIDANT that fights free radicals
√ FREE RADICALS are harmful molecules produced during digestion
√ Astaxanthin helps boost your dog’s IMMUNE SYSTEM
√ 8 ounces last 4 MONTHS for a 50 pound dog!

grizzlypetproducts.com
They say old friends are gold friends — an idea The Grey Muzzle Organization applies to dogs, too. The group funds programs especially for senior dogs at animal welfare organizations across the country. Everything from hospice care, adoption and medical screening programs to food banks and orthopedic bed drives aims to help senior dogs live out their golden years, months, weeks or even days in a place of love, security and peace.

www.greymuzzle.org

Packed with tools and resources for pet parents looking to take the best care of furry friends, the AARP’s Pet Channel covers hot topics like what to do about a pudgy pooch, estate planning that includes four-legged family members and how to help a pet adjust to a new home. You can even join the discussion at the AARP Online Community forums for advice and support from other members.

www.aarp.org/relationships/pets

Pets are part of the family, and when they pass away we want to remember all the joy they brought to our lives. Pets-Memories.com gives grieving pet parents a place to honor four-legged friends in a special way — by creating an online memorial for posting memories, photos and videos of their beloved pets. The website is free and friends and family can even light virtual candles or leave messages in honor of your departed pet.

www.pets-memories.com
WE’VE ALL HEARD THE POPULAR SAYING, “EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN,” and it seems treatments for furry friends are no exception. As veterinarians worry more and more about antibiotic resistance, researchers are reassessing traditional remedies such as the antiseptic properties of tea tree oil and the antibacterial abilities of manuka honey for use in treating four-legged family members.

In some cases, research has proven these “old world” therapies can be helpful in healing, and an increasing number of vets are using them alongside more modern treatments. Read on to learn about a few time-tested techniques still in popular practice today:

### MANUKA HONEY

**WHAT:** The first recorded use of honey applied topically to treat wounds dates back to ancient Egypt. Since then, the antibacterial and antioxidant benefits of honey became widely recognized around the world prior to the discovery of antibiotics. Today, the most commonly used type of honey in veterinary medicine is manuka honey, made by bees pollinating the manuka tree of New Zealand and Australia.

**WHY:** In 2008, research by Dr. Thomas Henle, head of the Institute of Food and Chemistry at the Technical University of Dresden, Germany, revealed that manuka honey contains a substance, methylglyoxal (MGO), which inhibits bacterial growth.

Exotic pet veterinarians have found this especially useful as it provides an alternative treatment for abscesses in species where many antibiotics are toxic.

**IS IT BONE-A-FIED?** Avoid the sweet temptation to treat your pet with household honey — the stuff in the bear-shaped bottle won’t have the same effect! If your furry family member has an infection, always seek treatment from your veterinarian, who can then advise you if the use of manuka honey therapy is the best option or not. If your vet concludes that manuka honey is indeed appropriate in treating your pet, you’ll want to ensure the honey has a unique makuna factor (UMF®) rating of 10+ in order to be beneficial — this assures high quality and purity.

### MASSAGE

**WHAT:** Known as tui-na in traditional Chinese veterinary medicine (TCVM), this technique using the hands, arms and elbows to stimulate healing and wellness dates back not just centuries, but millennia. There are references to medical massage in paintings and writings of many ancient civilizations, including those in China, India, Japan and Egypt. Julius Caesar reportedly travelled with a masseuse for his war dogs!

**WHY:** In pets as in humans, massage works by stimulating the skin, muscle and the structures within, such as blood vessels and lymph nodes, to increase blood supply to specific areas of the body. This promotes circulation of healing white blood cells, as well as elimination of inflammatory toxins.

**Oldies -But- Goodies**

Putting time-tested treatments to work on new pet health problems

DR. JULES BENSON
In addition, manipulation of the joints encourages suppleness and strengthens the muscles supporting them. In practical terms, the benefits can include speeding up recovery from surgery and keeping arthritic pets moving.

**IS IT BONE-A-FIED?** Medical massage has proved effective for some pets, but even the National Board of Certification for Animal Acupressure and Massage cautions that massage is never a substitute for veterinary medicine — rather, it can be used along with modern treatments to promote health and healing. Thinking of trying it at home? Be careful that you don’t do more harm than good. You’d be better off seeking the guidance of qualified veterinary physiotherapists and leaving Fido in their capable hands — literally!

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**ACUPUNCTURE**

**WHAT:** Acupuncture is an area of TCVM that has been used to treat animals for more than 2,000 years. The practice is similar in pets as in two-legged patients, involving tiny sterile needles inserted at specific points in the body to stimulate energy flow, restoring balance and good health.

**WHY:** Many pet parents and vets alike have seen pets respond positively to acupuncture treatments used for a variety of conditions, including arthritis, intervertebral disc disease, allergies and gastrointestinal problems. Acupuncture can help reduce pain, increase blood flow and boost a pet’s immune system. When used as a preventative therapy, acupuncture is said to retnue the body and help it run more smoothly.

**IS IT BONE-A-FIED?** Researchers have stated that encouraging data does exist to show that acupuncture can benefit furry friends, but they recommend more studies to zero in on the science behind it. If you think your pet could benefit from acupuncture, talk to your vet about how to find a certified veterinary acupuncturist (CVA) in your area. These are licensed veterinarians who have completed additional education courses approved by the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society.

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**MEDICAL-GRDAE MAGGOTS**

**WHAT:** It may turn your stomach, but these little larvae can help pets heal! For centuries, doctors and vets alike have recognized the ability of maggots to clean infected wounds — the practice reportedly dates back to ancient Mayan culture. Army medics also noticed a link between specific fly larvae maggots and healing dating back hundreds of years. The use of maggots declined when penicillin was introduced in the 1940s, but some veterinarians and doctors still recommend them for antibiotic-resistant wounds.

**WHY:** In veterinary treatments, special maggots — which only live on the surface and do not burrow into the flesh — are applied to a wound and held in place with a dressing. The larvae nibbles away on the infected tissue, stopping when they reach the healthy margins; this is what makes them so effective at clearing up infection. After two to three days, the dressing and engorged maggots are removed.

**IS IT BONE-A-FIED?** In the U.S., medical-grade maggots are classed as a prescription medical device. Their use is licensed for the treatment of non-healing ulcers, pressure sores and infected surgical wounds. The results are generally very good, provided the right species of larvae is used.

If you are considering combining Western and “ancient” complementary therapies, always consult with your veterinarian to ensure they will work well within your four-legged friend’s overall health plan.
My 10-year-old Boxer always had a deep bark, but I’ve noticed her voice is changing. Is something wrong?

Assuming your dog hasn’t been barking for hours on end, or had respiratory symptoms like coughing or nasal discharge, the change could be caused by inflammation of the larynx or vocal folds. When an older, large-breed dog experiences a voice change, it is often due to a partial paralysis of the larynx. Laryngeal paralysis can lead to conditions like aspiration pneumonia (since the dog no longer has the normal protective mechanisms in place for the airway) and heat-related illness (because the dog cannot dissipate heat effectively via panting). I’d definitely make a trip to see your veterinarian.

Our 13-year-old cat has suddenly started urinating outside her litter box. Why is this happening after so many years?

This is one of the most frequent problems I hear from cat owners. There can be many different behavioral or medical abnormalities that result in a cat eschewing her litter box. In an older cat without a previous history of inappropriate elimination, I tend to be suspicious of an underlying medical problem. Sometimes changes in the home environment cause anxiety or stress, which can account for a sudden refusal to use the litter box. If your cat’s water intake, urine output or weight has changed, a medical condition could be to blame. Urinalysis and blood work can evaluate kidney function, thyroid level and any signs of inflammation in the bladder. Bottom line, if your girl is not using her litter box like she should, get her to your veterinarian for a work up.

Q: My senior cat has started to develop a bad odor — we’re not sure why. Should we try giving her a bath?

A healthy cat should never have a discernible odor, so a thorough physical exam by your veterinarian should be your first step. The most common cause of foul odors in a cat is infection, and the most common source of infection is their teeth. Most cat owners do not regularly evaluate their cat’s oral health at home (and most cats are not in the habit of allowing them!). I have seen horrific dental disease that absolutely shocked the pet parents. And the most frequent comment I hear after I show a cat owner the infected teeth? “Oh, so that’s where that smell was coming from!” Luckily, a dental cleaning under anesthesia offers a quick resolution to this pesky and often painful condition.

Other sources of infection can be the ears and skin, but these are far less common than dental disease. Kidney failure is another common cause of foul odor in feline friends; it creates a condition called uremia, and the odor from this – as well as oral ulcers caused by the kidney disease – can lead to pretty pronounced bad breath. If your senior girl doesn’t smell right, it is time to schedule a checkup!
Our dog is 14, and friends tell us we should get another dog before we lose her. Is this a good idea?

That is a wonderful question! The answer is tricky, because it depends. There really is no right or wrong answer, but you should think about your old girl’s personality and lifestyle before adding to the four-legged family. Is she generally laid-back? Does she get along with most dogs, or do canine companions make her touchy? Is she dealing with any health issues that leave her weak, tired or painful; in other words, vulnerable?

If she’s a sociable old lady who likes other dogs and is in relatively good health, then I would say that getting another dog could work very well for you. Sometimes a bit of youthful energy can be good for an older dog, but there are some caveats. I would not choose a dog that is much bigger and stronger than your current dog. New puppies and young dogs can certainly inspire an older dog to move around more, but she doesn’t need to be fending off the playful advances of an enthusiastic large-breed puppy. Make sure that any new addition is a size and energy level that can be easily tolerated by your current pet, and give her a place to get away from it all if she’s feeling tired or overwhelmed.

When done right, a new dog can be a great companion to one in her golden years.

Our 8-year-old German Shepherd mix has been shedding a lot more lately, and he seems to get the shivers even on warm nights. What can we do?

These may be symptoms of thyroid disease. While we worry about hyperthyroidism in cats, our canine friends are likelier to suffer from hypothyroidism. Since the thyroid hormone drives metabolism, a level that is too low leads to a dog who is lethargic, gaining weight and often heat seeking (which may explain that shivering on a warm night). Another clue indicating thyroid disease is changes to a dog’s coat. Abnormal hair loss, pigmentation of the skin, rashes and other skin changes can indicate a problem. The good news is that thyroid disease is relatively easy to diagnose and treat. Thyroid medication is safe and effective, and monitoring of the condition is very straightforward. The most rewarding part is that most dogs have a dramatic response to treatment and I often hear, “he’s just like a puppy again!”

**Do you have a question for a Petplan veterinarian?**

Go to: GoPetplan.com/ask-an-expert

But note, please check with your regular veterinarian if the problem is persistent or requires immediate medical attention.
Darlene Cook wasn’t expecting a cancer diagnosis when her 10-year-old Golden Retriever Liberty (Libby) began limping. Because Libby had tested positive for Lyme disease in the past, Cook — herself a veterinarian — suspected her dog had relapsed. But MRIs of Libby’s chest, abdomen and bones revealed a different story: Libby had a localized bone cancer called an osseous plasmacytoma, and surgery was not an option.

“Because it is such a rare cancer, we didn’t have a lot to go on,” recalls Cook, “but the recommended treatment was radiation therapy. The original plan required 22 treatments, Mondays through Fridays, at the [nearby] University of Minnesota.”

After the third day of treatment, Cook saw a red flag. “One of the risks of radiation is the anesthesia and intubation necessary to administer the treatment. Some animals develop a cough after intubation that can turn into pneumonia. Libby started coughing on the third day. That concerned me because she still had considerably more treatments to go.”
Libby's inoperable bone tumor made her a perfect candidate for CyberKnife radiation, according to Dr. Siobhan Haney, VMD, MS, DACVR (RO) at the Veterinary CyberKnife Cancer Center. “If there are any areas of uncertainty — like when 99% of a tumor is removed by a surgeon but some cancerous cells remain — a much larger field of radiation is needed to blanket the area, and that’s when conventional radiation is ideal,” says Dr. Haney. “But when there’s a physical tumor visible to the naked eye or via MRI, we can target that tumor exactly with a large dose of CyberKnife radiation.”

Why the difference? CyberKnife radiation is delivered via an “intelligent” arm so accurate it can target the cancer within a 1-5 millimeter tissue margin. Conventional radiation delivers the treatment over a much broader field of 20-30 millimeters.

This accuracy is significant because CyberKnife targets only the cancerous cells, and spares the healthy organs and tissue surrounding a tumor from damage. Because the risk of harming healthy cells is virtually nonexistent, CyberKnife can administer a much stronger dose of radiation, which means the entire course can be delivered in fewer treatments.

Osteosarcomas like Libby’s are one of the most frequent types of cancer Dr. Haney treats at the Center, which is connected with HOPE Veterinary Specialists in Malvern, PA. “Bone tumors are tough to treat and there’s generally a poor prognosis associated with them,” says Dr. Haney. “Traditional radiation gives pets an average of maybe two to four months of survival time. With CyberKnife, we’ve seen pets survive six to 12 months. Not only can this make a huge difference to the pet owner, but the dogs are more comfortable because the side effects are so minimal.”

“A lot of people don’t want to take the first step to talk to a veterinary oncologist because the words ‘chemo’ and ‘radiation’ scare them,” says Dr. Pam Lucas, DVM DACVIM (Oncology) at South Carolina Veterinary Specialists & Emergency Care. “But the goal of treatment is quality of life for an animal, so most treatments don’t have the side effects people go through. There are very few cancers that we cure, but even a one-year survival time equates to about five years for a human — most people don’t think about that. CyberKnife takes it one step further for preserving quality of life.”

Typical side effects of conventional radiation therapy for pets include burns to the skin, swelling, ulcers, nosebleeds and lethargy, among others; CyberKnife virtually eliminates these. “When we treat nasal tumors we might see a little hair loss on the bridge of the nose, and skin can turn darker where the radiation is aimed,”

### Treatment Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment Type</th>
<th>Tissue Margin</th>
<th># of Treatments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CyberKnife</td>
<td>1-5 mm</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Radiation</td>
<td>20-30 mm</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"I think CyberKnife is going to dramatically improve the quality of life for sick pets..."
says Dr. Haney. “About 10 percent to 15 percent of patients being treated for brain tumors experience a little swelling in the brain — which sounds serious, but it’s actually not. We treat the swelling with steroids and it gets better in a day or two. It’s a significant improvement over conventional radiation. There’s less medication and less need for follow-up care. It makes a pet’s life a thousand times better.”

“I think CyberKnife is going to dramatically improve the quality of life for sick pets because it spares critical structures like the eyes, ears, mouth and back of the throat from damage,” says Dr. Lucas. “For senior and geriatric pets, you worry about long courses of radiation because of the amount of anesthesia required, but with CyberKnife you get the same benefit without as much strain on other vital organs like the heart and kidneys.”

**a rapid response**

Dr. Haney says patients often show signs of improvement after the first or second treatment. For Libby, the CyberKnife radiation improved her symptoms almost immediately. “She was limping when she came in [to the Center], but by the third day of treatment her limp was barely perceptible and her cough was gone,” says Cook. “She has continued to do well. She’s playing ball, chasing squirrels — you’d never know she had cancer.”

The rewards of CyberKnife radiation can be great, especially in treating one of the most frightening cancers: brain tumors. “You can have a dog or cat who presents with severe clinical signs like circling, compulsive behaviors or aggression,” says Dr. Lucas, “but with appropriate therapy the prognosis can be bright. Clients sometimes come in with a debilitated pet but after radiation it’s like a light switch goes off and suddenly they have their old pet back again.”

**clearing the hurdles**

If there is one drawback to CyberKnife, it is that the technology is so new to veterinary medicine that it isn’t yet widely available. The Veterinary CyberKnife Cancer Center is one of just two facilities in the U.S. offering the treatment, and for many pet parents the $5,000 to
$9,000 price tag — plus the burden of travel — can be prohibitive.

“I’ve been doing my best to spread the word to clinics that see a lot of cancers so they know there is now an additional option for treatment,” says Cook. “I also promote pet insurance to my clients. When the time comes and there’s a costly decision to be made, pet insurance takes money out of the equation.”

Dr. Lucas agrees. “Many clients can’t go out of pocket for these advanced treatments because most of them don’t have pet insurance,” she says. “This is one of the reasons we advocate for it so much.”

While it is still early to determine the full effect veterinary CyberKnife can have on treating cancer in pets, so far we know it is at least equivalent to conventional radiation in terms of survival times. The reduced number of treatments and fewer doses of anesthesia could mean that in time veterinarians will be able to escalate the radiation dose for a potentially better outcome.

“Right now we are on the cusp of a really exciting time in veterinary oncology,” says Dr. Lucas. “In the future perfect

“In the next five to 10 years, I think we’ll see more treatments [like CyberKnife] become available.”

“Our experience so far has been fantastic,” says Dr. Haney. “It’s not a cure, not a magic bullet, but it is a better treatment that allows pets to return to quality of life.”

Looking at a dog like Libby, whose age and type of cancer could have made her treatment both rough on her physically and risky for her health, CyberKnife seems to hold a lot of promise.

“It is important to know that there is hope,” Dr. Haney continues. “A lot of times cancer is so negative; people have preconceptions about what treatment is like, but there are options out there. There are options and there is hope. We value quality of life over anything. There are so many more things available today than even five years ago.”

For many four-legged cancer patients, successful treatment integrates traditional and alternative therapies. According to Dr. Haney, CyberKnife radiation often pairs well with acupuncture — in fact, two of the Center’s staff members are also certified veterinary acupuncturists. “The good thing is the animals are already under anesthesia [from the dose of radiation], so administering acupuncture is easier and the needles can stay in longer — it takes that variable of worrying about the animal moving out of the equation.”

Here’s how a few pin pricks can perk up pups undergoing cancer treatment.

Acupuncture can:

• relieve pain
• stimulate the appetite
• boost immune function
• restore energy levels
• increase serotonin and endorphin levels
• minimize GI discomfort
• increase blood circulation
• raise white blood cell count (especially important for pets receiving chemotherapy)
by dr. ernie ward

As our cuddly companions celebrate more and more birthdays, it’s important to consider how their dietary needs change with age. Today’s nutritional science offers pet parents healthier food choices that can help extend longevity, reduce disease and improve happiness for furry friends. It’s important to talk with your veterinarian about dietary strategies that make sense for your senior, but here are a few tried-and-true tips I use for feeding older pets.

**the fountain of youth**

Maintaining adequate hydration is essential for an aging pet’s brain health, kidney function, blood pressure, immune system and more. Make sure your mature pet gets lots and lots of fresh water. Monitor the litter box and note bathroom breaks during walks to track hydration status. If your pet is urinating only small amounts infrequently (or too much too often!), let your vet know immediately, as it could signal a problem.

**senior slim-down**

Research shows that lean animals live longer and experience fewer medical problems than their pudgy counterparts. If your pet is celebrating double-digit birthdays, it’s time to review your feeding regimen. Older pets are typically less active and have less muscle and a slower metabolism. Ask your veterinarian to calculate your pet’s daily calorie needs, considering age, lifestyle and medical issues. Generally, senior pets need fewer calories than when they were younger.

**premium protein**

Senior pets, especially cats, need higher amounts of easy-to-digest proteins as they age; older pets simply can’t metabolize, process or store proteins as well as they did when younger. Ask your veterinarian about switching to a high-quality, specially formulated senior pet diet, or about the best way to adjust the amount or type of protein in your senior pet’s diet.

**sensible supplements**

Senior pets often benefit from additions to their daily diet. I’m a big advocate of omega-3 fatty acids (DHA and EPA) for pets seven and older, and glucosamine can help soothe achy joints. Other supplements to consider include SAMe (S-Adenosylmethionine) for liver protection; antioxidants, B vitamins and vitamin E for brain health; and medicinal mushroom extracts for the immune system. Coconut oil can promote mental function and potentially help prevent Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome (CDS), similar to Alzheimer’s disease in dogs. I also suggest melatonin for older pets having a hard time sleeping.

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**recipe: zucchini scones**

Need a highly nutritious, low-calorie, hydrating treat for dogs (and the adventurous cat)? Try these!

- Preheat oven to 400˚F. Mix shredded zucchini with salt and let sit in a colander in the sink for 10 minutes to drain. Squeeze out all excess liquid with paper towels.
- Mix zucchini with flour and eggs. Divide mixture evenly into greased 12-muffin tin. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes.
- Let cool before serving.

Approximately 60 calories per scone

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3 cups of shredded zucchini (2 medium)
1½ cups chickpea flour
2 eggs, whisked
1 tsp. salt
unusual measure-mutts and surprising cat-tistics

pet stats

21

Age, in years, of Petplan’s reigning oldest feline policyholder, a calico kitty from Indianapolis named Oreo. (She was insured at age 17!)

17

Number of puppies born to Giselle, a purebred Golden Retriever from Winnipeg, MB, in a single litter in 2010. An average litter has six to eight pups!

Age, in years, of Pal, the Rough Collie who played Lassie in the 1954 pilot for the eponymous TV series.
10

age, in years, of a Sussex Spaniel named Ch. Clussexx Three D Grinchy Glee (aka "Stump"), who was the oldest dog to ever win Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

10,000+

number of “senior” dogs currently available for adoption on petfinder.com.

14

number of ancient dog breeds that have been identified via DNA analysis, including the Afghan Hound, the Siberian Husky and the Shiba Inu.

38

birthdays celebrated by Crème Puff, an American cat who passed in 2006 but holds the Guinness World record for oldest cat.
As Queen Elizabeth II pointed out, “Grief is the price we pay for love,” and nowhere is this more true than where our beloved pets are concerned. Saying goodbye to a four-legged companion is an inevitable part of caring for a pet. It’s a tough topic to talk about, and (understandably) not one that many pet parents consider until they’re faced with it. However, doing some objective thinking about end-of-life decisions prior to a health crisis can help pet parents approach what lies ahead — and the emotional decisions they may encounter — with a clear mindset.

From a veterinary perspective, euthanasia is binary: We dislike performing it, but I believe that the ability to relieve suffering and bestow some dignity on the passing of a pet is a solemn responsibility and a crucial function of our position. If we didn’t feel that putting a pet to sleep was an appropriate treatment, we couldn’t do it.

So what would I ask you to consider when dealing with a terminally ill pet? From my perspective, quality of life (QOL) should be the cornerstone of every decision made. But how does one measure a pet’s QOL? I approach the question using the “five freedoms” as a guide:

1. From hunger or thirst
2. From discomfort
3. To express normal behavior
4. From pain, injury or disease
5. From fear & distress

Using this framework, I often recommend that pet parents hang a calendar in their home and mark whether each day is a “good” day or a “bad” day for the pet. When the bad days in a week outnumber the good days, consult with your veterinarian about whether there are additional options to swing the balance back — or whether it may be time to consider humane euthanasia.

While this is often the hardest decision we have to make as pet parents, our pets deserve for us to put aside our grief and allow their well-being to be our primary concern.
**Breaking down the Five Freedoms**

**Freedom from Hunger or Thirst:** Can your pet be fed and hydrated without causing undue stress?

Many disease processes (and the drugs to treat them) can affect pets’ appetites, and getting our sick pets to eat can be really tough. Using home-cooked diets, human foods, appetite stimulants or even external nutrition aids like a feeding tube can help, but any pet who is unable to take in any nutrients (where administering food or water is inordinately stressful) has a poor QOL.

**Freedom from Discomfort:** Is your pet comfortable while living with his disease?

Depending on the disease, pets may have to deal with discomfort from the effects of chemotherapy, from using mobility aids (like slings or a wheeled cart) or from having feeding tubes placed, to name a few. Even relatively simple issues like incontinence or immobility can severely affect the comfort of a pet. Pets who aren’t able to tolerate the discomfort associated with treatment will have a correspondingly poorer QOL.

**Freedom from Pain, Injury, or Disease:** Can any pain your pet may feel as a result of his disease be controlled at an acceptable level?

Veterinary pain management has been revolutionized in the past 25 years. Introduction of species-specific anti-inflammatory drugs, along with a greater understanding of medications used in other species, allow us to treat pain better than ever before. However, some conditions (like severe hip dysplasia or some types of cancer) are inherently painful, and providing adequate pain relief while maintaining an acceptable QOL for the pet can be difficult. Consult with your vet about medications (including dosages), complementary therapies like massage or acupuncture and the signs to look for when pain is not able to be managed any more.

**Freedom from Fear and Distress:** Is it possible that a better QOL can be achieved by declining potentially life-extending treatments?

Let’s go back again to our touchstone in these decisions — quality of life. If your pet already hates and fears the vet’s office (it happens; we try not to take it personally), is a weekly trip there to receive chemotherapy treatment going to make him hide under the couch for the rest of the week? Would your pet be happier spending that time at home, even if it ends up being less time? Treatment options are just those: options. My advice is often to try something for a period of time (be it chemotherapy or assisted living) and see how the pet tolerates it — they often surprise us. Ultimately, my belief is that the focus should be on quality of life, not quantity.

**Freedom to Express (Most) Normal Behavior:** Can your pet still do things that make him happy?

Pets living with chronic disease may start to have difficulty moving around or being able to relieve themselves. Does this affect them negatively, or are they content for a caregiver to help them with movement by, say, using a sling? Is a lack of activity or social interaction severely affecting your previously active, social pet’s QOL? Obviously the answers are subjective, but these are all questions worth asking and discussing with your veterinarian.
To stop nails from bleeding:
You can save a lot of time and money by trimming your pet’s nails at home, but inevitably, at some point, you will cut a nail too short. If you catch a quick during a nail trim, grab a pinch of cornstarch, flour or baking soda and press it against the bleeding nail. If baking is not your bag, dragging a clean, unscented bar of soap across the nail can stop the bleeding, too. None of these things work as quickly as styptic powder, but they’ll do in a pinch!

To soothe a carsick stomach:
Anxiety often fuels carsickness, so conditioning your pet to car rides is the best thing you can do to help with nausea on the road. But if you and your furry friend are faced with a car ride, withhold food and water for a couple of hours first. If it’s too late for that, ginger or mint may come to your rescue. Try a few ginger snaps, peppermint tea or even one or two clean, fresh mint leaves in their food if they’ll allow it.

Fresh air can also make a world of difference. Crack the window nearest to your pet’s seat to stave off sickness.

To keep your pet’s bowl clean:
Canned food is best for our feline friends, but it can be such a mess to clean! It’s important to keep your pet’s food bowl spic and span, but don’t let dried-on, caked-on pet food deter you from feeding canned food. If your pet’s bowls aren’t dishwasher safe, give the inside of his food bowl a light coating of all-natural olive oil. The oil will prevent leftover bits and pieces of moist pet food from adhering to the bowl, and give your pet’s coat a nice shine!

More paw care:
Keep unscented baby wipes by your back door — you can use them to clean off muddy paws, but they also work to remove pollen and allergens from the paws of sensitive pups.
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When Marc Peralta took the reins of Best Friends Animal Society’s No-Kill Los Angeles (NKLA) campaign, he knew he’d be working to end euthanasia at animal shelters in one of the world’s largest cities. But he never imagined the move would also bring both a fiancée and a new furry friend into his life.

Three years later, Peralta — a golden boy in the animal welfare world if there ever was one — is a fixture on national TV and social media, as well as press events, industry conferences and fundraisers. Never far from his side both on and off-camera are fiancée Kristen McManus (whom he met at a NKLA adoption event) and at least one of the pair’s four dogs: Pugs Shorty, Asher and Milton (the newbie), and Pit Bull Clarence.

“All my dogs come to work with me — it’s rare to see me without one of them,” says Peralta. “Dogs are great ice breakers and wonderful ambassadors. I use them as a secret weapon to talk to people.”

Not that he needs much help. If there’s one thing Peralta is passionate about, it is the no-kill mission. Though it’s a movement 30 years in the making, Peralta is giving it new life. Under his leadership, NKLA has reduced euthanasia in city shelters from 23,000 annually to 12,000 — a historic low in L.A.

“It’s not a shelter problem, it’s a community problem.”

For more information, please visit www.nkla.org.

saving lives

NKLA is a coalition of nearly 100 local groups working to make Los Angeles no-kill by 2017.

how
Increasing access to spay/neuter services and adoption advocacy

2014 numbers
24,300 dogs and cats adopted via NKLA
16,700 sterilization surgeries supported by Best Friends

Peralta on euthanasia
“If a huge city like L.A. can do it, anyone can do it,” says Peralta. “NKLA is the future. We’re rethinking the system.”

If saving tens of thousands of animals’ lives sounds like a monumental task, that’s because it is. But Peralta says his ability to “unplug” while off-duty is a huge factor in avoiding burnout — and his pack of pups helps him do it.

“I give 100% when I’m at work, but my pets absolutely help me decompress. If I want to chill at home and watch House of Cards all day long, they’re happy to do so,” he chuckles.

While binge-watching Netflix is a pet pastime, Peralta says the dogs also enjoy walks, playing at the beach, dining out and even grocery shopping. “[Kristen and I] love them being a part of our everyday lives; they’re like our little kids.”

Parents aren’t supposed to play favorites, but Shorty — the pup Peralta has had the longest — holds a special place in his heart.

“Everybody has that animal who changed their life, and Shorty is the one for me,” says Peralta. And though he affectionately calls Shorty his Lexus for being “super expensive,” it’s clear he considers his best buddy to be priceless.

After Shorty swallowed a rock last year at the Best Friends 30th anniversary party, he needed surgery — but not just to remove the foreign body he swallowed. Like many snub-nosed breeds, Pugs often benefit from soft palate surgery to clear their airways, and Shorty was no different.

“It was a huge procedure and I was terrified, but $3,000 later the rock is gone, he’s breathing better and his shorter palate can actually prolong his life. It was really a blessing in disguise,” Peralta says.

Shorty, Asher, Milton and Clarence certainly struck gold the day they found their dad, but Peralta says they’ve brought as much to his life as he has to theirs.

“Animals push me to be better. I was a work in progress for a very long time, but I’ve gained so much perspective,” he says. “When you spend your life helping something in need, it teaches you a lot about compassion and gives you a sense of purpose. I’ve never been happier with the dude in the mirror.”

Peralta’s next endeavor is of a more personal nature: he and McManus will be married at the Best Friends Animal Sanctuary in Utah in September, making the Peralta pack officially a party of six. After the vows are said and bands of gold exchanged, Peralta plans to go back to doing what he does best.

“I’ll be working with animals for the rest of my life, wherever there’s a need and wherever my family takes me,” he says. “I plan to keep doing everything I can to achieve a no-kill city for Los Angeles. The sky is the limit from there.”
fetching finds for discerning pet parents

Welcome to the fetch! marketplace, where you’ll glimpse outstanding products, services and innovations that help furry friends live blissfully and age gracefully. In this, our “Golden Oldies” issue, we’re featuring products to keep gray-muzzled pooches and wise felines young at heart. These were hand- (or in the case of Montgomery and Jethro, paw-) picked by our editorial staff, which means we have used them ourselves, we loved the results and felt they deserve to be treasured!

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Getting a New Pet? You Should Adopt a Senior!
Adopters often think it’s a puppy they want. That is, until they consider this…

Everyone loves puppies and kittens. But like baby humans, they require extra special attention in those early stages. Skip the toughest stuff and move right to the best parts of having a pet. Here’s why adopting an older animal is where it’s at!

• Just add love. Senior pets have been around the block — and have great leash manners to prove it! They often come with skills they are proud to show off. From “sit” and “stay” to being house-trained, older pets require much less from adopters when it comes to training.

• What you see is what you get. When you’re adopting an older animal, you already know what they will look like as an adult, how big they will grow to be, and what their personality will be like. No surprises here!

• They are full of gratitude. Imagine your life changes in an instant. Instead of sleeping in your warm bed surrounded by those you love, you’re sleeping on a cold concrete floor. Then, a loving person whiskers you away to the happy life you deserve. Adopted senior pets are full of the same relief you’d feel. And they can’t wait to show you their appreciation.

For more info and to browse locally adoptable pets of all ages, visit www.Adopt-a-Pet.com

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There’s fast, and then there’s “MACH 8 Kalm Sea’s Tulrush to the Finish XF T2B MXC2 MJS3 CCA ADHF” — or “Rush,” for short. And while his registration name conjures up a top-secret spy plane, this high-flying pup is all Golden Retriever.

“He’s just got this fabulous Golden personality and a really strong work ethic. All he wants to do is please,” raves mom and handler, Debbie.

Since 2010, the pair have logged at least 40 weekends a year at AKC agility trials throughout the Mid-Atlantic. In that time, the 7-year-old has run, jumped, climbed and weaved his way to eight AKC Master Agility Champion titles (MACH 8) and the Golden Retriever Club of America’s Agility Dog Hall of Fame (ADHF), among other honors denoted by the letters and numbers that follow his name.

Rush even ran at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show’s Master Agility Championship this past February, where 600 of the nation’s top dogs came to compete — and placed fifth in his 24” jump height class. “It was over the top!” recalls Debbie.

Like any champion, Rush didn’t start at the top; his rise to glory took years of dedicated training and the guidance of trusted mentors.

“I got into agility with another Golden Retriever, Finn, and Rush was actually his understudy,” recalls Debbie. “When Finn retired, he was the top Golden Retriever in AKC Preferred Agility.”

But on his eighth birthday, Finn succumbed to an aggressive form of cancer known to affect Golden Retrievers. “It was so devastating. I’ve had 25 Goldens and Finn was an exceptional dog,” she remembers.

The loss prompted Debbie to reconsider pet insurance. “I’d had it years ago, but was very unhappy. So when I decided to do this, I really looked around. Petplan offered the best value and peace of mind by far. It’s so easy I recommend it to everybody!”

Thankfully, Rush has never had an injury.

“These dogs are not weekend warriors; they’re world-class athletes, which helps minimize injuries,” Debbie explains.

But she’s glad to have greater security should she ever again face tough healthcare choices.

“Cancer care can be incredibly expensive. Having insurance means you can skip the financial question and go straight to considering which treatments will be most beneficial.”

With Rush protected against both illness and injury, the duo looks forward to a long career chasing down perfect runs — something Debbie likens to pairs figure skating. “Even though you’re going so fast, you and the dog are communicating. And when you cross that finish line after a clean run, the dog knows it! They get the same high that you do. It’s an incredible rush, you know?” We think Rush knows it, too.
WHAT MOVES YOU as an animal lover?

Perhaps it’s the way your furry best friend greets you when you come home, or how your companion wakes you up each morning, ready to play. You just can’t help yourself because you love animals. It’s the same for veterinary professionals. Their love for animals shines through in the work they do every day.

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