



# SEASIDE PET CLINIC

Quality Medicine with a Personal Touch

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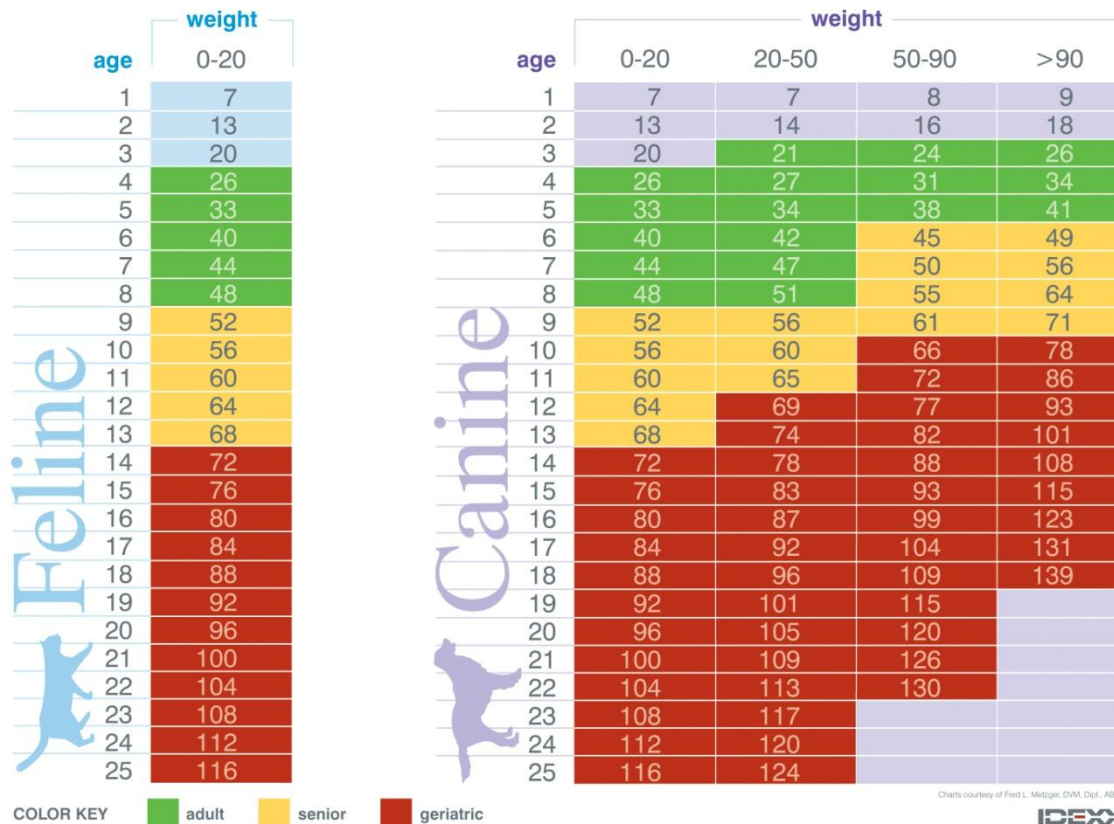
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## Senior Pets

Thanks to advances in medical care, great diets, and outstanding owners, pets are living to increasingly older ages. We are learning more every day about how to best care for these senior dogs and cats. Watching for certain symptoms, twice yearly physical exams, and baseline laboratory testing are important for keeping our pets healthy in the latter years of their lives.

*What is considered senior?*

“Senior” is applied at different ages for different species and sizes of pets. Cats and small dogs are classified as senior at around age 9-10. Larger breeds of dogs are considered senior much earlier at age 5-6. Refer to this chart for more accurate aging of your pet.



*What is baseline testing and why is it important for my senior pet?*

“Baseline” testing is simply a set of laboratory tests performed when your pet is considered healthy so we can establish a set of normal values specific for them. Sometimes we will also detect subtle abnormalities that could help prevent or delay future disease processes. Unfortunately, our dog and cat friends can’t tell us when they are having minor symptoms that would indicate disease in a human. A mild stomach upset every few days that doesn’t result in vomiting or diarrhea would go unnoticed, but it might be picked up as the start of kidney disease in the routine blood work. Baseline testing is

important for picking up the start of diseases and it should be performed at least yearly. Some of the testing done may include a blood chemistry panel, complete blood count, urinalysis, thyroid testing, ECG, and x-rays.

*What are some of the changes my pet will have with aging?*

Most people describe their senior pets as “slowing down”. This could be due to sensory changes such as a decrease in vision, hearing, ability to sense touch, or taste. Just like humans, it’s important to continue to keep your pet’s senses sharp and stimulate them as much as possibly through playing and even training. Regular exercise and play can also help aging joints that often experience arthritis. The important word here is “regular”. Going out on a 3 mile hike when your 8 year old lab is only used to walking around the block will definitely make their joints sore, but maintaining a consistent daily level of exercise will greatly benefit arthritis. Still another issue of aging is change in bathroom habits. Pets may not be able to hold their urine as long or may experience dribbling of urine while sleeping. Be sure to rule out medical issues like kidney disease or diabetes before just assuming this is normal for their age.



Trouble, resident clinic cat, age 14



*Should I be feeding my pet differently?*

There are many foods specially formulated for older pets and we highly recommend taking advantage of these. As pets age, nutrition and calorie needs change, and that is why these diets are important. Many higher end diets incorporate increased levels of Omega 3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and other special nutrients that benefit the senior. Also important are lower calories so the less active pet doesn’t become overweight and put more stress on arthritic joints.

*What should I watch for in my older pet?*

Anything that seems different about your pet could indicate a disease process and should be investigated by your veterinarian. A few symptoms you should definitely watch for are as follows:

- Sustained, significant increase in water consumption or urination
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Significant decrease in appetite or failure to eat for 2 days
- Repeated vomiting
- Change in housebreaking
- Lameness lasting more than a few days
- Foul mouth odor or drooling
- Excessive panting or heavy, rapid breathing when at rest
- Inability to chew dry food
- Persistent coughing or gagging
- Rough or dirty appearing coat
- Change in normal habits like sleeping on the sofa or walking down stairs
- Crying or whining for no apparent reason

*Best care for your senior pet:*

Make sure your pet is examined at least twice yearly by your veterinarian and have baseline laboratory testing at least yearly.