



Senior wellness checkups

Have you noticed changes in your pet as they become older?

Perhaps they have become slower, changed weight, or you may have noticed a general stiffness or changes in their appetite or thirst?

Just like us humans, our pets present similar age-related changes as they grow older.

You may have put these changes down to them 'just being old'.

However, because our pets can't talk to us or tell us how they are feeling, it is important to become really 'tuned into' them and their behaviours and understand that certain changes mean certain things.

At what age is my pet a 'senior'?

It used to be considered that one human year was equivalent to seven pet years, however that's not always accurate, especially for dogs where there is a wide range of breeds and body sizes. Large breed dogs might be considered 'senior' at five years of age.

Also, it's important to note that our pets are now living healthier and longer lives than ever before, with research suggesting the

average life span of household pets has increased dramatically over the short span of a decade

What is a senior wellness check-up and is it important?

As your pet's owner you are in the best position to look out for warning signs of age-related diseases.

Whilst some age-related changes



are to be expected, others can indicate a more serious underlying condition or problem, so it's important to get your older pet into a vet clinic for regular check-ups. We consider an annual check-up for an older cat or dog essential, this is because many conditions, if detected and treated early can lead to much more successful management and see our senior pets living longer, more comfortable lives.



ANIMAL ANECDOTES

With July Hebbel from Tauranga Vets

A yearly clinical exam can detect problems such as heart disease, dental disease, thyroid problems, arthritis, cataracts, and cancer to name just a few. Studies have found that up to 80 per cent of senior pets seen in practice had at least one unrecognised medical condition.

A senior check-up will also include blood tests which will enable vets to screen for early detection of a range of diseases, giving a baseline that can be used for future monitoring. Blood tests are quick and pain free and allow for valuable information about what's going on inside before outward signs may be noticeable in your pet. Senior check-ups and blood tests give your pet the best chance to have disease diagnosed early and for a treatment plan to be implemented early. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your older pet, please do not hesitate to call us at Tauranga, Katikati, Te Puna and Papamoa Village Vets on: 0800 838 7267.

Feeding your pet raw food in a safe manner

Good nutrition is fundamental to help your pet to regain and sustain health.

After changing to a well-balanced raw food diet, I find that many dogs and cats show a remarkable improvement in their condition and often, chronic ongoing health problems begin to resolve.

With a raw food diet there are some risks to be mindful of. Firstly, ensure that the diet is balanced with the right amounts of meat, raw bone, organ meat and vegetables (not onions as they can be toxic). Secondly bugs like e.coli and salmonella can be present in raw meat



which I have found to be uncommon in pre-frozen meat from a reputable supplier.

Cats and dogs have a greater tolerance for these organisms than us humans but just in case there may be risk to you, don't share your pet's utensils.

Thirdly, parasites such as hydatids are killed after freezing raw meat for the appropriate time or can be avoided by feeding chicken which doesn't harbour hydatids. The fourth risk is the safety of feeding bones (never cooked or of a size that can be choked on) which I'll elaborate on further next month.

When done well, I find that the benefits



PET TALK

with Dr Liza Schneider

of a raw food diet generally far outweigh the risks and help to improve quality of life for many pets.

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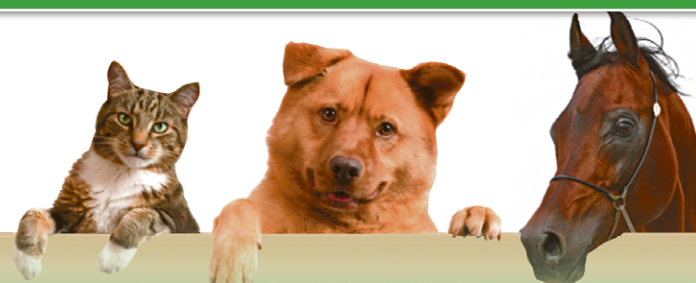
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