



NEWS



Aged Care

“Caring for our dogs” is, in essence, a generic phrase and something many of us do without giving it a great deal of thought.

It is something that does require more thought than many realise, as each growth stage of our dog’s life requires appropriate management. Just as our puppies require constant monitoring, feeding, cleaning and grooming, so do our geriatric dogs in a very similar way. Typically, the easiest life stage is the ‘adult’ years where maintaining our dogs in peak health and condition is the least demanding, as the close monitoring of growth has passed. Generally, body condition, coat and skin management are usually what we refer to as the ‘maintenance’ stage and while no less important, your dogs are easier to keep in top shape throughout those adult years.

As our dogs age we should begin to monitor more closely the coat, skin, body condition, teeth, toenails, etc. I know from experience with my own dogs, that what was once routine grooming, which was enjoyed by my dogs, will start to become uncomfortable during the bathing and/or brushing process, at least with some. It is important to still maintain a grooming regime, but it may become necessary to complete a full groom in a number of sessions instead of all at the one time. Sometimes your dog’s teeth, that were once perfect, now seem to get stained quite quickly. Toenails that were once worn down naturally, now seem to grow longer and stronger.

The aging process brings many changes that need to be monitored. Watch for signs of arthritis: adjust their environment to ease discomfort and seek veterinary advice on how to best manage the condition.

Observe good dental hygiene with your dogs, just as you don’t enjoy having dirty and decayed teeth, neither do your dogs. Some dental conditions could be an indicator of a more serious health problem, so should never be ignored. Diseased teeth can also contribute to very serious health problems as well, so regularly check the teeth of all your dogs.

Over-long toenails impact on how your dogs walk and can cause a lot of discomfort. Keep them trimmed to minimise undue stress on possible tender joints.

Regular brushing stimulates circulation to help keep skin healthy. Dry flaky skin is fairly common in older dogs and quite often comes about from minimal brushing or bathing. While bathing too often can contribute to dry flaky skin, for the comfort of your dog they should be kept clean and free from external parasites.

Do not forget to check your dog’s ears! Some breeds are predisposed to ear infections more than others, but even some breeds that typically never have any concerns throughout their life, will develop a problem as they age. Untreated ear infections are not only extremely uncomfortable or even distressing for some dogs, but it could lead to permanent deafness.

Your dog’s behaviour should serve as the first warning of something that is “not quite right”.

We all owe it to our loyal companions to help them to age well, with dignity and the least discomfort possible. These simple steps will assist in doing just that!

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