



Mountainview Animal Hospital

WINTER NEWSLETTER



The bottom line

Degenerative joint disease or arthritis is the accumulation of the daily wear & tear of the joint causing inflammation, pain, damage to the cartilage and bones and eventually wasting of the muscles.

Animals will almost never cry or whine from pain, making it very difficult to tell when they are sore. Subtle changes in your pet's behaviour may be an important sign of pain.

Glucosamine is a popular natural supplement taken for arthritis pain. It is readily available in drug and health-food stores, but the form of glucosamine that humans take does not work as well in animals. Dogs and cats need a slightly different formulation.

Veterinarians carry the appropriate type of glucosamine for your pets. It comes in pet friendly flavours too.

DON'T LET YOUR OLD PET SUFFER IN SILENCE

This summer we noticed that Nike, our clinic cat, was displaying some unusual behaviour (more unusual than normal). She was missing and falling occasionally when attempting to jump on the counters, and more often than not, was asking us to lift her up. At first we thought she was just being demanding and lazy, typical for her, but eventually we believed that on some days she was actually unable to make the jump. Once we examined her, we realized that she was suffering from a bit of pain and stiffness in her hips and knees. Nike has 'Degenerative Joint Disease' or arthritis. Although arthritis is a very common problem in cats and dogs of her age, it is none the less disappointing that our Nike has pain. We don't believe that Nike is in a lot of pain, and it doesn't appear to be a problem for her every day, but even a little bit of pain on some days is not okay for our Nike.

Animals will almost never whine or cry from chronic pain, making it difficult to tell when they are sore. As responsible pet owners we cannot let our senior pets suffer in silence. Although for Nike, the evidence of her pain was in her inability to jump up on counters, other pets may show their pain differently. Signs of arthritic pain can vary greatly depending on the severity of the disease and the type of pet you have. This list may help you recognize the signs of pain in your pet.

Does your pet:

- Circle repeatedly before lying down?
- Prefer lying down to sitting or standing?
- Limp?
- Pant excessively?
- Eat less or more?
- Sit in abnormal positions?
- Have trouble getting up from a lying position?
- Show signs of restlessness?
- Lag behind or tire easily on walks?
- Still enjoy the things he/she used to or avoid them lately?
- Look unkempt, groom himself/herself less?
- Interact less with the family, behave withdrawn?
- Cry or bite when being handled, or avoid contact?
- Show signs of stiffness, particularly after lying down?
- Have trouble jumping up on the furniture or going up stairs?
- Miss the litter box or soil himself/herself?

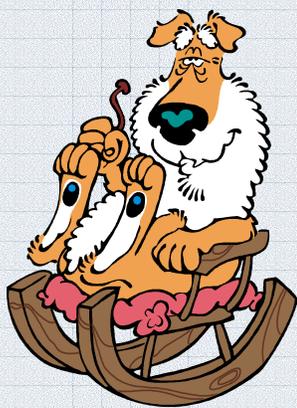


If you notice your old friend doing any of the behaviours listed above, then you need to ask us about how to treat your pet's arthritis pain.

To treat Nike, we first did a blood test to make sure her kidneys and liver were healthy enough to tolerate the arthritis medication. Next, we started her on an anti-inflammatory to stop her pain and reduce any inflammation that may be occurring in her joints. We also started Nike on an animal version of glucosamine. She responded so well to our treatment, that after only one month we were able to wean

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Nike did not like the taste of the first glucosamine medication that we offered her, so we changed it to a different flavoured liquid. Now she looks forward to her 'special' treat.



Most people assume that cats can see in the dark. While it is true that a cat's vision at nighttime is far superior to ours, they still need some light to see. This is particularly true for older cats. If your cat is missing the litter box, try turning on a light where the litter box is.

Older pets with arthritis are often too stiff to bend and turn around to groom themselves as well as they used to. Gentle brushing and keeping their rear end clean will go a long way to make them feel better.

her off the anti-inflammatory; now she only takes her glucosamine once a day. We know that her arthritis will slowly worsen; and as it does we will reintroduce the anti-inflammatory. We may also add some omega fatty acid supplements, change her diet and eventually add a stronger pain medication. Twice a year we will test her blood and urine to make sure she is still healthy and not having any side effects from her arthritis medication. Because we are watching her closely, we will be aware of the changes occurring in her body as she ages and we will adjust her health care accordingly. In the meantime we are relieved that she is feeling better. We intend to enjoy Nike's company for many years to come.

We know many people with senior pets avoid bringing their pet to the veterinarian for fear we will tell them there is nothing we can do. We hope Nike's example will alleviate that fear; there is a lot we can do for our senior pets. Often very simple lifestyle changes, weight control, easy to give medications and lots of tender loving care can make our older pets' senior years happy, healthy and comfortable.

TIPS TO HELP YOUR OLDER PET THROUGH THE "GOLDEN YEARS"

Our pets have given us so much over the years, so we don't mind giving them a little extra tender loving care during their senior years; they have earned it. Here are some tips to help our old furry friends live a little easier and safer.

- ♥ Putting up baby gates at the top of stairs can prevent pets with poor vision and weak legs from falling down.
- ♥ Pets with arthritis and muscle weakness often have difficulty walking on slippery tile and hardwood floors. Placing plastic or carpet runners will give them a better grip and more confidence while moving around the house.
- ♥ These pets also have difficulty managing the ice and snow. Shoveling a path in the yard and dusting these trails with sand will safely allow an older dog access the outdoors during the winter.
- ♥ Our aging pets often have poor vision. It is particularly difficult for them to see at night. Leaving a light on in the hall or putting a night light near the cat's litter box will certainly help. Taking a flashlight along on your dog's walks will help them see where they are going.
- ♥ Pets that can't hear well will startle easily when you approach them. Stomping your foot on the floor to alert them of your approach may avoid accidental bites.
- ♥ Older pets with a loss of senses and arthritic pain may be more sensitive to the fast and often unintentional roughness of children. Teach children to be gentle and respectful. Better yet, have them keep their distance from the very old and weak.
- ♥ Older pets have less muscle mass and poor temperature regulation. They will get cold more easily during the winter months. Keep older cats and dogs indoors more. Outdoor cats that wander off the property may lose critical body temperature and may not be able to make it back home again.
- ♥ The colder weather is more likely to exacerbate arthritic pain. So will the dampness of a rainy day. Provide soft warm bedding for pets to sleep on. Gentle heat wraps (careful not too hot!), massages and arthritis medications from your veterinarian can keep your old friend more comfortable.
- ♥ The hot summer months can be hazardous too. Many older pets with heart or kidney disease can become dehydrated and over heated very easily. Make sure there is a fan, air conditioning or a shady place to keep them cool. Have plenty of fresh water available too.

The bottom line

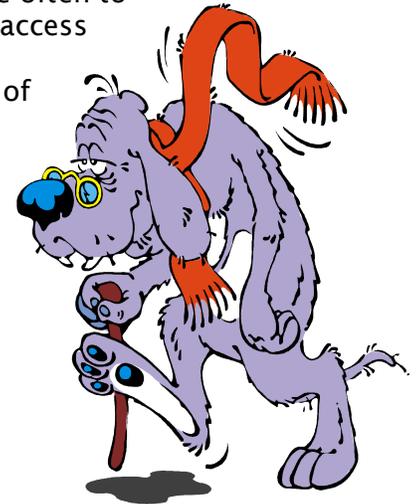
Never give human medication to your pet without asking a veterinarian first. Many of the medications that are well tolerated by humans can have dangerous, even fatal, side effects in our pets.

Add another litter box closer to your cat's sleeping area. Many older cats will not leave their cozy bedroom and go down two flights of stairs to the cold dark basement to climb into the litter box.

Our newsletter is printed three times per year. Each newsletter is printed on two sheets of paper and we send over 1500 newsletters each time. If we e-mail our newsletter we will save over 9000 sheets of paper per year.



- ♥ The proper diet is very important in the later years of life. Older pets have weaker digestive systems. Many of the treats and people food that they have received in the past may no longer be well tolerated. A premium pet food for seniors is designed to be more digestible and better balanced to suit the special needs of an older body. We would be happy to recommend the appropriate diet for your aging furry friend.
- ♥ Large dogs may have difficulty bending to reach their food and water dishes. Creating a platform to raise their dishes may make mealtime more enjoyable.
- ♥ Speaking of meal time, those rotten teeth are no pleasure to live with. Dental disease will cause oral pain, low grade fevers, weakened immune systems, affect their sense of taste and smell, and worsen heart, kidney and liver disease. Keeping your pet's teeth clean is less risky than you think. You will be surprised how drastically it will improve your pet's quality of life.
- ♥ Older pets (just like older people) lose some control of their toiletry habits. Older dogs will need to be taken outdoors more often to relieve themselves. Older cats will need easier access to litter boxes. Have more litter boxes throughout the house and make sure the sides of the boxes are not too high. Although cats do not often show it, they do get the same painful arthritis that dogs and people get.
- ♥ Arthritic pain may make it more difficult for your older dog to go on the long walks; but exercise is still very important. Instead of one long walk, go on several smaller walks throughout the day. Your old friend will enjoy the extra time together too.
- ♥ Have your pet checked by your veterinarian regularly, at least every 6 months. A lot of changes can occur in a short period of time in a pet's older body.



COME VISIT US ON THE WEB

Exciting news, we are in the process of designing a website, we hope to be up and running by the end of this year. There will be biographies of our staff and a description of our products, equipment and our services. If you have ever wondered what the back of the clinic looks like and have not attended one of our open house tours, then you can take a pictorial tour on our website. There is also a pictorial tour of a pet's surgery day with us. The pet centre section will feature lost and found pets, pet memorials and links to other websites of interest. We will also be posting our newsletters, past and present, on the site. We hope you will come to visit us and enjoy it. www.mountainviewanimalhospital.ca

E-NEWS

Once our web site is up and running we will also be looking forward to e-mailing future newsletters to you. Just one small step in reducing paper use. In the new year our receptionists will begin calling all of our clients to update our information and collect e-mail addresses. We will only use your e-mail address to send you our newsletter three times per year. If you have a minute, give us a call first to have your record updated.

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"Jingle Bells" was first written for Thanksgiving, but later became one of the most popular Christmas songs.

Donder (not Donner), which means thunder, was the original name of the reindeer who helped pull Santa's sleigh on Christmas Eve. He was paired with Blitzen, whose name means lightning.

Christmas trees take an average of 7 - 10 years to mature.



Remember many of the holiday decorations this time of year can be dangerous to our pets. Tinsel, glass balls, candles and all the rich foods should be kept away from curious pets.

The poinsettia plant was brought into the United States from Mexico by Joel Poinsett in the early 1800's.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR REFERRALS

We have always tried very hard to earn the trust and favour of both our furry patients and our human clients. We have been very lucky that many of you have recognized our efforts by recommending us to your friends and family. We have always appreciated your trust and kind words but have never formally shown our gratitude until now. In future, when you refer a friend or family member to us, make sure to tell them to mention your name so we can send you a small token of our appreciation. Thank you.

LIFE ACCORDING TO NIKE

We have had a great summer. It was hot, sunny and there was very little rain. Yet now that the fall and winter seasons have barely begun, we are already complaining that it is too damp, too cold and too grey. I too was guilty of this behaviour, until I observed Nike one afternoon. Nike spends most of her day sleeping on the window sill or bugging us for food; she literally does nothing else all day long. Until one sunny fall afternoon, Nike rose from her nap, ran to the front reception windows and began rolling around on the floor in a ray of sunshine. She was in heaven and was taking full advantage of the warmth and the light of the sun. As I enjoyed watching her, I thought an important lesson had presented itself. Rather than dwelling on the negative, we should take full advantage and enjoy the positive moments in our lives. So next time there is a ray of sunshine, I will stop, raise my face to the sky, breath deeply and enjoy. I draw the line at rolling on the ground though.



HOLIDAY HOURS



Dec. 24 th - Christmas Eve:	Open 9:00 - 12:00
Dec. 25 th - Christmas Day:	Closed
Dec. 26 th - Boxing Day:	Closed
Dec. 31 st - New Years Eve:	Open 9:00 - 12:00
Jan 1 st - New Years Day:	Closed

Unless otherwise specified here, Mountainview Animal Hospital will be open during its regular office hours. Animals in the hospital over the holidays will receive the same great care and attention as always. For those patients requiring emergency care over Christmas and New Years, the Emergency Veterinary Clinic on Hwy 10 will be open to serve your pet's medical and surgical needs. You can call ahead at 905-495-9907 or go directly there. The Emergency Veterinary Clinic is located on the south east corner of highway 10 and Wexford Rd, just one block north of Bovaird (Highway 7).

From all of us at Mountainview Animal Hospital,
we wish all of you

**A Very Merry Christmas, A Joyous
Holiday Season and A Happy New Year!**