**Your old best friend**

Puppies are great fun, but all too soon they are grown up and then, before you know it, they are entering their twilight years. Individual dogs and breeds age at different rates, but for most, when they reach 10 years, they can be considered to be in old age.

Older dogs tend to slow down, exercise less and often start to put on weight. They are usually content with their regular routines and enjoy spending quiet time with the family. Occasionally an elderly dog may become irritable and grumpy. This can be a sign of illness and pain, such as arthritis, so if this happens ask your Vet to check him over.

The earlier we pick up signs of disease or ill health, the more likely we are able to give effective treatment and make your dog’s last year’s more comfortable. Sudden changes in weight can be an indicator of some medical conditions, so need to be checked out. If he is overweight it may be just a matter of monitoring the feed intake and there are special diets which can help.

As dogs get older, their sense of smell and taste may be reduced and their appetite can be poor. Tempt him with small, good quality meals, three to five times during the day rather than giving one or two bigger meals. Our clinic carries a range of special diets designed for senior dogs, whatever their problems may be.

Plenty of clean fresh water must always be available as older dogs often need to drink more.

The slow winding down of the kidneys and other organs means that a greater through flow of water is required to get rid of body wastes. This is often the first sign of illness in older dogs.

Lumps and bumps begin to appear as dogs age, just under the skin or deeper. These are often innocuous but need to be checked out if you see them.

Your relationship with your dog is a very special one and most people regard them as a friend and part of the family. As your dog gets older he needs you more than ever. You are the person who knows him best and are most likely to detect small changes which may indicate that all is not well.

If you would like your best friend checked out please give us a call.

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