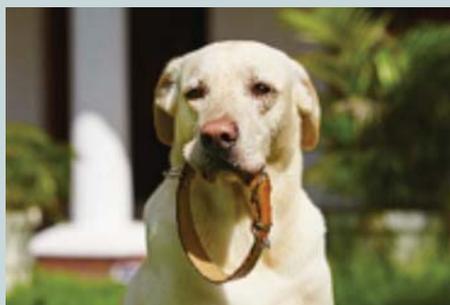




In this month's issue



1 JOINT DISEASES & ARTHRITIS IN DOGS – Causes and Management

Is your pet sore and stiff? Do they find it difficult getting up stairs or out of bed? Canine arthritis is characterised by pain and inflammation in a dog's joints caused by the breaking down of smooth cartilage that covers and protects the bones that form a joint. Once the bones are exposed, painful wear and tear can occur.

2 BEHAVIOUR CHANGES IN AGEING DOGS

Puppies have their behavior problems, and older dogs have theirs. For older dogs, in many cases it is not that they do not understand the 'rules,' but that they may, for many reasons, be unable to follow them.

3 DEMENTIA AND ANXIETY IN YOUR OLDER DOG – What you can do

It is sad to see our beloved animal companions get old and even harder to see them start to lose their mind.

4 DOG TRAINING AND BEHAVIOUR TIPS

The earlier the better – training puppies.

Joint Diseases and Arthritis in Dogs: Causes and Management

Many pets develop some form of joint disease during their lives. It can be mild, even unnoticeable to the pet owner, or it can be debilitating, severely affecting the pet's quality of life, or even causing complete lameness. The majority of cases fall somewhere in between.

While some pets may develop joint disease in the first half of their lives, signs usually do not appear until the latter half of life, which varies depending on your pet's breed. Dogs are more susceptible to arthritis than cats, and the larger dog breeds are more vulnerable than smaller breeds.

The most common signs of joint disease include stiffness, limping, or favoring a limb - particularly after sleep or resting, inability to rise, reluctance to jump or even climb stairs, and noticeable pain.

Causes of arthritis

Canine arthritis can occur as a result of:

- A joint infection
- Dislocation
- Trauma
- An inherited condition, such as hip dysplasia
- Immune system problems
- Obesity
- Ligament, tendon or muscle injury
- Fracture of bone that involves a joint
- Aging and natural erosion of cartilage

Management of arthritis

Medical treatment of hip dysplasia and osteoarthritis has greatly improved in the last several years thanks to the introduction and approval of several new supplements and drugs. Because hip dysplasia (and other types of dysplasias) are primarily inherited conditions, there are no products on the market that prevent their



development. Through proper diet, exercise, supplements, anti-inflammatories, and pain relief, you may be able to decrease the progression of degenerative joint disease, but the looseness in the joint or bony changes will not change significantly.

Medical management is indicated for both young dogs with clinical signs and for older dogs with chronic osteoarthritis. Because of the high cost involved with many surgeries, medical management is many times the only realistic option for many pet owners.

Weight Management

Weight management is the first thing that must be addressed. All surgical and medical procedures will be more beneficial if the animal is not overweight. Helping a dog lose kilos until he reaches



his recommended weight, and keeping it there, may be the most important thing an owner can do for a pet.

Exercise

Exercise is the next important step. Exercise that provides for good range of motion and muscle building and limits wear and tear on the joints is the best. Leash walking, swimming, walking on treadmills, slow jogging, and going up and down stairs are excellent low-impact exercises.

Warmth and good sleeping areas

Most people with arthritis find that the signs tend to worsen in cold, damp weather. Keeping your pet warm, may help him be more comfortable. A pet sweater will help keep joints warmer. You may want to consider keeping the temperature in your home a little warmer, too. Place the bed in a warm spot away from drafts.

Massage and physical therapy

Your veterinarian or the veterinary staff can show you how to perform physical therapy and massage on your dog to help relax stiff muscles and promote a good range of motion in the joints. Remember, your dog is in pain, so start slowly and build trust. Start by petting the area and work up to gently kneading the muscles around the joint with your fingertips using a small, circular motion. Gradually work your way out to the surrounding muscles. Moist heat is also beneficial.

Making daily activities less painful

Going up and down stairs is often difficult for arthritic pets, and for dogs, it can make going outside to urinate and defecate very difficult. Many people build or buy ramps, especially on stairs leading to the outside, to make it easier for the dogs to go outside.

Larger breed dogs can especially benefit from elevating their food and water bowls. Elevated feeders make eating and drinking more comfortable for arthritic pets, particularly if there is stiffness in the neck or back.

Source:

<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=2+2084&aid=231>

Behaviour Changes in Ageing Dogs

As they age, our dogs often suffer a decline in functioning. Their memory, their ability to learn, their awareness and their senses of sight and hearing can all deteriorate. This deterioration can cause disturbances in their sleep-wake cycles, making them restless at night but sleepy during the day. It can increase their activity level (resulting, for example, in staring at objects, wandering aimlessly or vocalizing more) or decrease their activity level (leading to less self-care and poor appetite). It can make them forget previously learned cues (commands) or habits they once knew well, such as house training and coming when called. It can increase their anxiety and tendency to react

aggressively. It can also change their social relationships with you and other pets in your home. Some pets may become more clingy and over-dependent, while others become less interested in affection, petting or interaction. Understanding the changes your dog is undergoing can help you compassionately and effectively deal with behaviour problems that may arise in your dog's senior years

Be sure to report all changes you see to your veterinarian. Don't assume that your dog is "just getting old" and nothing can be done to help him. Many changes in behaviour can be signs of treatable medical disorders, and there are a variety of therapies that can comfort your dog and manage his symptoms, including any pain he might be experiencing

Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is one of the most common behaviour problems seen in older dogs. A dog who has separation anxiety will become very anxious when he senses his owner is about to leave. When the owner does leave, the dog often becomes destructive, barks or howls, may urinate or defecate, and may salivate profusely. A dog with separation anxiety will often be overly exuberant when his owner returns.

Older dogs may have a decreased ability to cope with changes in routine. Vision or hearing loss may make them more anxious, overall, but especially when they are separated from the owner. Neurologic changes may also limit an older dog's ability to adjust to change.

Some of the main considerations in treating separation anxiety are:

- **Do not make a big deal about leaving or coming home** - that simply reinforces the behaviour.
- **Teach your dog to relax.** If your dog can learn to relax in a 'stay' for extended periods while you are there, he will be more likely to learn how to relax while you are gone.
- **Change your departure cues.** Many dogs know as soon as the alarm goes off, that it is a work day and you are going to leave. They start getting anxious as soon as they hear the alarm. We need to change our routine so the dog does not know we will be leaving.
- **Start with very short departures.** Determine how long you can leave your dog before he gets anxious. It may be only 10 seconds, so start there. Leave for 5 seconds, return, and if the dog has remained calm, reward him. Gradually increase the time you are gone, always returning before the dog becomes anxious, and rewarding him for staying calm.
- **Associate your departure with something good.** As you leave, give your dog a hollow toy such as a 'Kong' filled with a wonderful treat. This may take his mind off of you leaving.

- **Break up the dog's day.** If you are gone for extended periods during the day, you may want to think about having someone come in during the day to let your dog out and give him some exercise.
- **Crate your dog.** Many dogs feel safe in a crate, and being in a crate will help reduce their destructiveness. This will make it safer for them and your house.
- **Use a team approach.** Anti-anxiety medications may be needed to break the cycle of separation anxiety. Medication alone, however, will not solve the problem. Work with your veterinarian and an animal behaviourist to develop a plan that will work best for you and your dog.

Aggression

Older dogs may become aggressive for several reasons. Aggression may be the result of a medical problem such as one causing pain, vision or hearing loss, which results in the dog being easily startled, lack of mobility so the dog cannot remove himself from the irritating stimulus or diseases having direct effects on the nervous system, such as cognitive dysfunction. Stresses such as moving, a new family member, or a new pet may make an older dog more irritable and more likely to be aggressive. In a multi-dog household, an older dog who was the 'dominant' dog in the past, may find his authority being challenged by younger dogs in the household.

House Soiling

Some older dogs who have been housetrained for years, may start having 'accidents.' As with other behaviour problems in older dogs, there may be multiple causes for this change in behaviour. Any older dog with a house soiling problem should be examined by a veterinarian and the owner should be able to give a detailed history of the colour and amount of urine (or stool) passed, the frequency at which the dog needs to eliminate, changes in eating or drinking habits, the dog's posture while eliminating, and whether the 'accidents' only occur when the owner is gone. Medical conditions contributing to the house soiling problem should be treated appropriately.

Noise phobias

Some older dogs become overly sensitive to noise. One may think the reverse would happen since many older dogs will acquire some hearing loss. Cognitive dysfunction, immobility resulting in an inability of the dog to remove himself from the source of the noise, and the decreased ability of an older dog to manage stress may be factors contributing to noise phobia.

Increased vocalization

Stress in an older dog may translate itself into increased barking, whining, or howling. This can occur during separation anxiety, as a means to gain attention (if the dog cannot

come to you because of decreased mobility, he may be asking you to come to him), or because of cognitive dysfunction.

Nocturnal restlessness - changes in sleep patterns

Some older dogs may become restless at night, and stay awake, pacing through the house, or vocalizing. Pain, the need to urinate or defecate more often, the loss of vision or hearing, changes in appetite, and neurologic conditions can contribute to this behaviour.

Any medical condition contributing to this behaviour problem should be treated.

Cognitive dysfunction

According to Pfizer Pharmaceutical, 62% of dogs age 10 years and older will experience at least some of the following symptoms, which could indicate that he has canine cognitive dysfunction (CCD):

- Confusion or disorientation. The dog may get lost in his own back yard, or get trapped in corners or behind furniture.
- Pacing and being awake all night, or a change in sleeping patterns.
- Loss of housetraining abilities. A previously housetrained dog may not remember and may urinate or defecate where he normally would not.
- Decreased activity level.
- Decreased attentiveness or staring into space.
- Not recognizing friends or family members.

Many of the behavioural changes we see in older dogs can be due to medical conditions. If your dog's behaviour is changing, have your dog examined by a veterinarian. Your older dog is more easily stressed, so attempt to reduce stress by making any necessary changes in routine gradual, and decreasing the exposure of your dog to stressors. With patience, understanding, and treatments recommended by your veterinarian, you can help make your dog's older years a quality time for you and him.

Source:

<http://pets.webmd.com/dogs/guide/behavior-problems-older-dogs>,
<http://www.peteducation.com/article.cfm?c=2+2110&aid=616>

Dementia and anxiety in your older dog – What you can do

It is sad to see our beloved animal companions get old and even harder to see them start to lose their mind. In many dogs the first sign of this is anxiety in the evening or throughout the night, although dementia or cognitive dysfunction syndrome can manifest in many different ways.

Not all dementia has an anxiety component to it and not all anxiety in older dogs is from dementia but the two often go together.

So what causes dementia in older dogs?

There are four main causes of dementia or cognitive dysfunction syndrome.

1. **Free radical formation:** Free radicals harm healthy cells in the brain.
2. **Hypoxia to the brain:** In other words there is not enough blood getting to the brain.
3. **Alterations in neurotransmitters:** There is too much or not enough of certain necessary neurotransmitters in the brain. You need neurotransmitters to have your neurons or brain cells function together.
4. **Neural infiltrates such as B amyloid and lipofusion:** These infiltrates destroy healthy brain tissue, similar to Alzheimer's disease in people.

Sometimes these problems are reversible if caught early but even when they are not, there are things you can do to help slow down the progression of the disease and help with symptoms. Usually in spite of everything we do, dementia is progressive and eventually gets to the point that nothing helps anymore. This process can happen quickly or occur slowly over a number of years.

There are a number of things that you can do to help your older dog with dementia or anxiety. Please check with your veterinarian to come up with a plan that is safe for your dog. Dementia and anxiety are some of the most frustrating and painful problems seen in older dogs and can be very difficult to deal with. Be gentle on yourself and your dog companion and try to find a healthy way to work with these problems for everyone in the household.

When dementia progresses to a point where you beloved companion is no longer present and enjoying life or in pain sometimes the greatest gift we can give them is to help them to go through euthanasia. This is not an easy decision to make and there are no set guidelines that tell you when it is time. This can differ from dog to dog. The best we can do is to look into our hearts for what is right.

Source: <https://pathwithpaws.com/blog/2010/02/01/dementia-and-anxiety-in-your-older-dog-what-to-do/>

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Dog Training Tips

by Sonya Bevan "Dog Charming"

The Earlier The Better: Training Puppies



Mythbuster: Puppies need to be at least six months old before training.

Nope!

The sooner you start training with positive reinforcement of all the behaviours you want, the better. This myth began when traditional methods involved heavy collar and leash corrections which could injure growing pups (these techniques can injure adults as well.) Puppies are little sponges who soak up teaching with positive reinforcement at an amazing rate. Wait for six months at your own peril!

Just remember to keep sessions short to cater to puppies short attention span (5 - 15 minutes)

Don't know what to do or where to turn? Sonya is more than happy to talk to guardians about the problem behaviours and training concerns they have with their dogs.

Every situation and every dog is different.

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