



SENIOR DOG CARE CHECKLIST

Welcome to the Senior Dog Care Checklist! This comprehensive guide covers all the essential health and wellness considerations for your senior canine companion. From mobility and cognitive health to dental care and nutritional needs, we've got you covered to ensure your furry friend enjoys their golden years to the fullest.

MOBILITY

- Assessing your dog's mobility and flexibility.
- Joint Health: Monitoring for signs of arthritis or other joint conditions, such as stiffness, limping, or difficulty rising.

COGNITIVE HEALTH

- Monitoring your dog closely for signs of cognitive decline, such as disorientation, confusion, or changes in behavior, and ensuring a safe environment to prevent accidents.
- Maintaining a consistent daily routine to reduce anxiety and confusion, including regular mealtimes, walks, and rest periods.
- Environmental Enrichment: Creating a stimulating environment with varied sensory experiences, novel objects, and opportunities for exploration.
- Engage your dog in regular mental exercise and activities that challenge their cognitive abilities, such as interactive toys, puzzle feeders, obedience training, scent games, or learning new tricks, to keep their mind engaged and active.

EXERCISE AND ACTIVITY

- Providing regular physical activity tailored to your dog's breed, age, size, and health status. This may include walks, runs, hikes, fetch, or play sessions in the yard or park.
- Offering a variety of activities to keep your dog mentally and physically stimulated, preventing boredom and promoting overall well-being.
- Rest and Recovery: Allowing time for rest and recovery between exercise sessions, especially for older dogs or those with health issues, to prevent overexertion and injury.

DENTAL CARE

- Providing opportunities for natural chewing behaviors, such as giving appropriate raw bones, which can help maintain dental health by reducing plaque and tartar buildup.
- Establishing a routine of brushing your dog's teeth with a dog-specific toothbrush and toothpaste, ideally daily or several times a week.
- Monitoring Signs of Dental Problems: Being vigilant for signs of dental problems such as bad breath, swollen or bleeding gums, loose or missing teeth, difficulty eating, or excessive drooling, and seeking veterinary attention promptly if any issues arise.
- Scheduling regular dental check-ups with your veterinarian, which may include professional cleanings to address any existing dental issues and ensure optimal oral health.

NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

- Monitoring your senior dog's weight closely and adjusting their diet as needed to prevent obesity or maintain a healthy weight. Senior dogs may have reduced activity levels and slower metabolisms, so portion control is crucial to prevent excess weight gain.
- Providing a balanced diet rich in antioxidants and essential nutrients.
- Ensuring adequate protein levels to support muscle maintenance and overall health, but also considering the source and quality of protein. High-quality animal-based proteins are often preferred for their bioavailability and amino acid profile.
- Ensuring your senior dog has access to clean, fresh water at all times to support proper hydration and kidney function. Older dogs may be prone to dehydration, so encourage drinking by placing water bowls in easily accessible areas throughout the home.
- Nutrition and Supplements: Addressing specific health needs such as cognitive health or joint health by providing a balanced diet rich in antioxidants and essential nutrients, and considering supplements tailored to support these areas of concern.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

- Be vigilant for signs of discomfort or pain in your senior dog, as they may not always vocalize their discomfort. Look out for changes in behavior such as limping, whining, or reluctance to engage in activities they once enjoyed. Keep an eye on alterations in eating, drinking, or bathroom habits, as well as unexplained weight loss. Noticeable fatigue, breathing difficulties, or signs of confusion, aggression, or anxiety should also be monitored. Other indicators could include increased startle responses, bumping into objects, repetitive behaviors, or reduced interaction with humans and other pets. Identifying and addressing these signs promptly can help manage your senior dog's pain and ensure their comfort and well-being.
- Exploration of various treatment options, including medications, supplements, physical therapy, acupuncture, or chiropractic care, to alleviate pain and improve mobility.
- Incorporation of alternative therapies such as massage, hydrotherapy, or cold laser therapy to complement traditional pain management approaches.
- Regular monitoring and adjustment of the pain management plan as needed to ensure optimal comfort and quality of life for your senior dog.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADAPTATIONS

- Ensuring your home environment is safe and accessible for your senior dog, with non-slip surfaces and easy access to food, water, and resting areas.
- Orthopedic Support: Considering orthopedic beds or supportive bedding to provide comfort and relieve pressure on achy joints.
- Mobility Aids: Exploring options such as ramps or steps to help your dog access elevated surfaces like beds or vehicles more easily.

GROOMING AND HYGIENE

- Assist your senior dog with grooming. As dogs age and their mobility decreases, they may find it challenging to groom themselves as effectively as before, especially in hard-to-reach areas. Brush them thoroughly to prevent matting and remove loose fur, adjusting frequency based on coat type and shedding. Use grooming time to inspect for any unusual lumps or bumps that may require veterinary attention.

VETERINARY CARE

- Seek out a veterinarian who understands both you and your dog's needs, and who advocates for the level of care you believe is best for your dog's well-being. This may include a veterinarian who is open to incorporating both holistic and Western medicine approaches into your dog's treatment plan.
- Prioritize open communication with your veterinarian, discussing any concerns or changes in your dog's behavior, appetite, or overall health that you have noticed. This proactive approach can help identify and address potential health issues before they become more serious.
- Schedule regular veterinary visits for preventive care and early detection of age-related health issues.
- Discuss any concerns that have come up during your dog's regular check-ups.
- Share your dog's vital averages, gathered from regular tail-to-snout checks, including temperature, heart rate, respiratory rate, and any other relevant observations, with your veterinarian for a comprehensive understanding of your dog's health.
- Understanding and considering your veterinarian's suggestions for preventive care, such as vaccinations, parasite control, and dental cleanings.
- Planning for end-of-life care and making decisions about palliative care or euthanasia in consultation with your veterinarian, if necessary.

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Considering your dog's overall well-being and making decisions that promote a happy and fulfilling life in their senior years.