



Understanding senior cats

Our cats are living healthier and longer lives because of nutritional and veterinary advancements, as well as your, the owner's, care and vigilance of your pet's health. Longer lifespans result in our cats reaching a stage of their life coined senior or geriatric that highlights the variation in care required and expected aging changes that differ from being an adult.

Changes that are a result of the aging process are a natural part of life and adaptations to them occur in a subtle and gradual fashion. Knowing what changes are expected as our pet ages is the first step in recognising and adapting to the changing requirements of an older pet.

Cat Life Stages:

Birth – 6 months	Kitten
7 months – 2 years	Junior
3 – 6 years	Adult
7 – 10 years	Mature
11 – 14 years	Senior
15+ years	Geriatric



Taken from International Cat Care
<https://icatcare.org/be-a-detective-for-your-cats-health/>

Cats are considered senior from 11 years and geriatric from 15 years of age respectively. Although many physical changes are visible and accompany getting older, consideration for the hidden changes is important. Advancing age alone is not the disease but the next period in life where monitoring for health problems needs to occur more frequently.

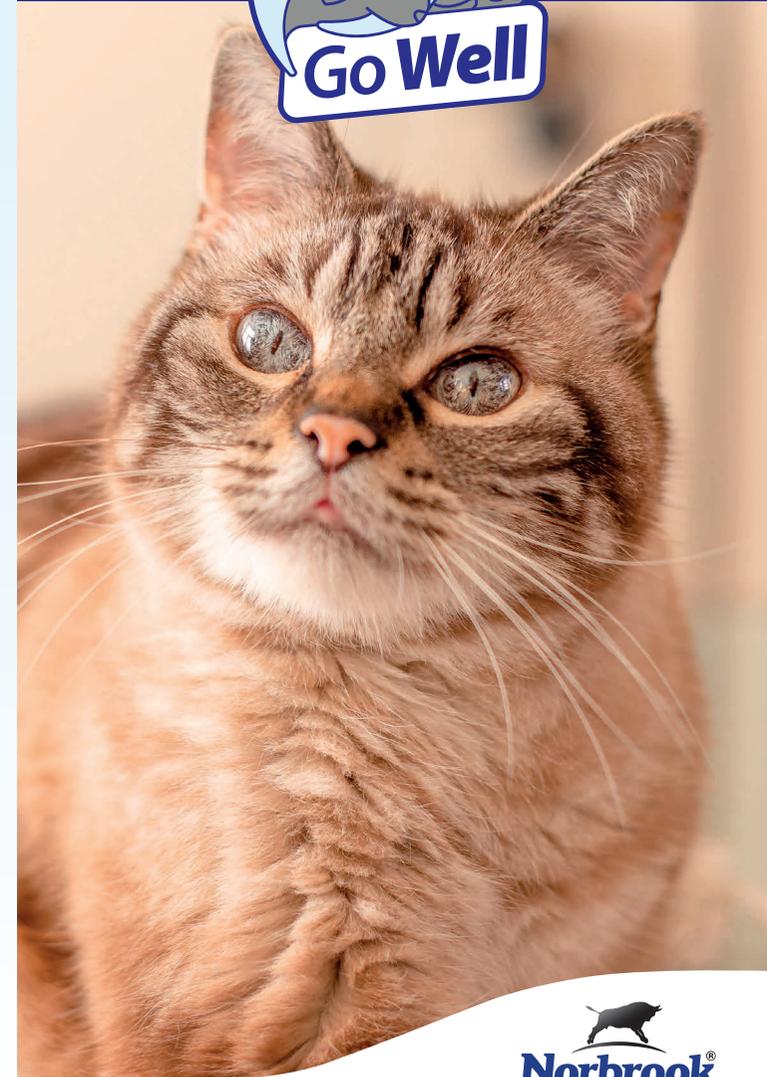


Your veterinarian is your trusted professional to ensure your pet remains healthy long into their senior or geriatric years. We trust the information contained will help you and your vet develop a plan for your cat's senior years to achieve the best outcome in retaining their good health.

Have you noticed any changes?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weight loss or gain | <input type="checkbox"/> Hiding or aggression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Activity levels | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunger or appetite loss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fur coat | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mobility or stiffness | <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Issues with balance | <input type="checkbox"/> Toileting habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioural | <input type="checkbox"/> Sight and hearing |

Should a changed daily routine or pattern be noticed at any age, and no matter how minor, speak with your vet. Cats are adept at hiding signs and symptoms from their owners early on in a disease process, so small changes are important to notice.



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Setting up for a senior cat

The senior check

So what should we look for?

What to consider in a plan for your senior cat



- Nutrition**
- Physical exercise and more entertainment**
- Mental stimulation**
- Grooming assistance**
- Scratching post to a horizontal surface**
- Provide ramps and steps to help them get to their favourite spots.**
- Nightlights**
- Variety of water bowls**
- Being patient and slowing down your walks**
- Keeping them cool in summer and warm in winter**
- Comfortable bedding**

Your veterinarian will advise the frequency of health checks and their recommendations for lifestyle changes required for the senior or geriatric life stage that would best suit your cat, taking into consideration your pet's age and general health.

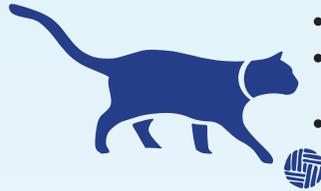
Should you notice changes in your cat's behaviour note them down to discuss at your next vet examination. Remember that cats will hide symptoms of disease early on.



Behavioral Changes

There are areas of your cat's health that require monitoring and altering more frequently as their age advances. This is due in part to the normal aging process and the behavioural changes that occur.

These include:



- Claws and nails
- Weight and diet
- Preventative health routine
- Screening laboratory tests

Although reaching the age described as senior years is only a number, there is an increase in importance for wellness exams including laboratory testing with your vet to detect health problems early. Increasing the regularity and laboratory testing of these checks allows your vet to monitor subtle changes in your pet's appearance, behaviour or organ function that often are challenging to recognise.

Observation

Some diseases that are more common in senior cats develop clinical symptoms that are noticeable. It is important as owners to listen to what our cat's behaviour is telling us.



Most common health conditions:

Arthritis

- Behavioural pattern changes at home
- Grooming and litterbox changes
- Changes in resting spots

Dental disease

- Changes to teeth and gums
- Halitosis or bad breath
- Appetite changes

Hyperthyroidism

- Weight changes
- Hungry all the time
- Screening tests

Kidney disease

- Weight changes
- Altered toileting habits
- Screening tests

Diabetes

- Weight changes
- Altered toileting habits
- Screening tests

Skin lumps or growths across the body

- Clinical symptoms are often subtle and it is important to monitor a little more closely using blood, urine or faecal laboratory tests.