



## Emeryville Animal Hospital

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*We Treat Your Pet Like Family*

So, you've got an old timer! It can be scary to see our faithful companions getting older – but we're here for you every step of the way! We want nothing more than to see you enjoying your pet's golden years to the fullest.



It is important to remember as we see our pets aging on the outside, that their insides are changing as well! Joints are not able to lubricate themselves as well, digestive systems and metabolism are changing even if we can't see it, and organs are functioning at a different rate. Through regular veterinary exams, wellness testing, exercise and nutrition, we can strive for a happy and comfortable life.

## Wait, What About the Weight?!

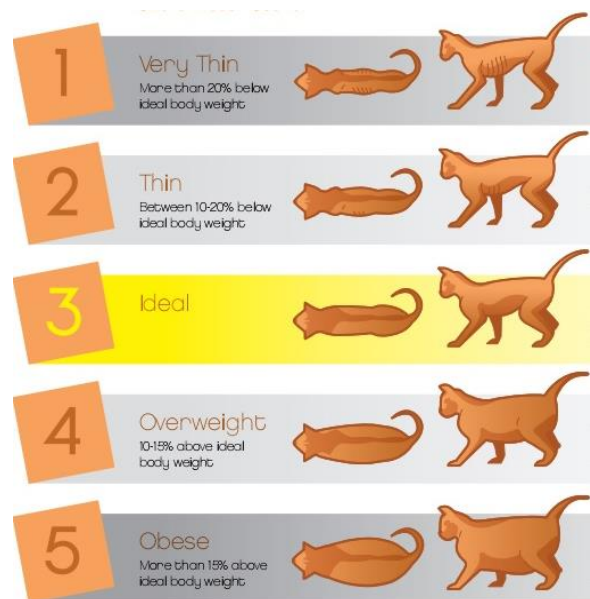
A common problem of aging pets is unhealthy weight – whether that is weight gained or lost. This can be due to a multitude of factors: less interest in walks and playtime due to discomfort, changing metabolism and food preferences, dental problems, and internal disease.

Exercise is an important step to weight management to promote healthy muscle mass, keep joints in good shape and prevent excess weight gain. Playing with toys, climbing stairs, and chasing balls are great activities for mature cats.

Feeding a diet specifically formulated for senior pets will provide adequate fibre for healthy digestion, balance fat and calorie intake to energy output, and provide the optimum levels of essential fatty acids and antioxidant vitamins.

Royal Canin Renal Support Early Consult provides:

- Controlled phosphorus level and supplemental omega fatty acids to support renal health and L-tryptophan, phosphatidylserine and a patented anti-oxidant blend to help maintain cognitive function in older cats.
- Omega-3 fatty acids (EPA & DHA), glucosamine and chondroitin to reduce inflammation and support joint health
- The S/O® Index indicates that this diet has been specifically formulated to help manage urine pH, urine volume, and mineral concentrations to prevent the formation of struvite and calcium oxalate crystals and stones
- High levels of quality protein supplemented with the amino acid leucine to help maintain muscle mass in older cats.



## Sweet and Sour Seniors

It is not unusual for behaviour changes to develop in older pets and often there may be multiple concurrent problems. It is important to note that some changes associated with aging might not seem significant, but even a minor change in behaviour can indicate underlying medical problems or declining cognitive function.



What can cause behaviour changes?

- Some pets are less able to adapt to change and become very stressed when routines or environment has changed.
- Disease processes can lead to what appears as behaviour changes. Kidney or urinary issues can lead to house-soiling, thyroid or other endocrine disease can lead to personality changes, and a decline in senses (hearing and sight) or painful conditions can contribute to fear and irritability.
- Cognitive Dysfunction leads to changes in awareness, deficits in learning and memory, and decreased responsiveness to stimuli. Although the initial symptoms of feline dementia are mild, they gradually worsen over time, which is known as “cognitive decline.” Although it will not cure your cat, maintaining a healthy and stimulating environment can help slow the progression of cognitive decline. This typically involves creating a daily routine.

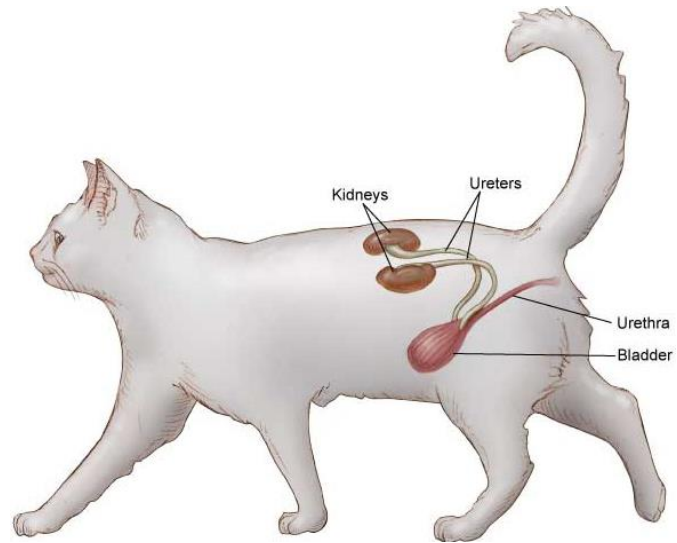
## Staying Ahead of the Age



Wellness testing is performing diagnostic tests that give us insight into how your pet’s internal organs are functioning. Our pets are fantastic at hiding illness until their disease has progressed significantly. If we can detect a disease before it shows, we can often take steps to manage or correct the condition before irreparable damage is done. Wellness testing is typically done annually, with additional testing in between if warranted to monitor a condition. There are four main categories of wellness testing: complete blood count (CBC) to assess white blood cells for infection or inflammation, red blood cells for anemia, and platelets for clotting ability, biochemistry profile to assess organ functions and diabetes, urinalysis to assess bladder and kidney function, and thyroid hormone testing to assess the thyroid gland which controls metabolism.

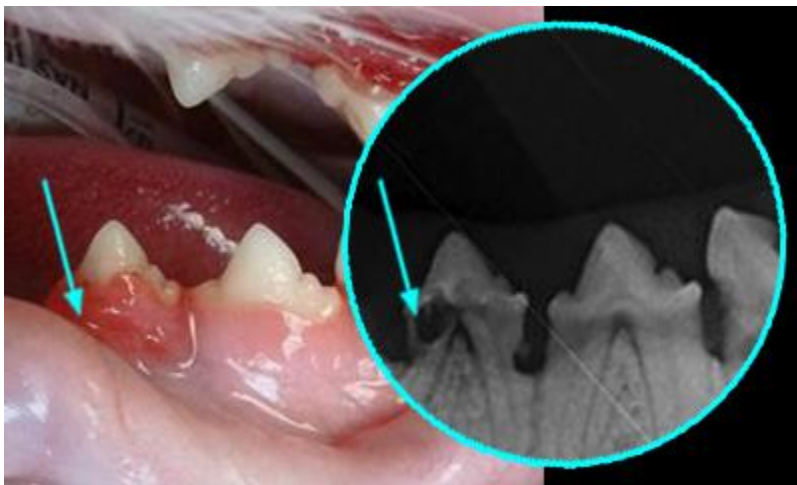
## Medical Conditions to Be Aware Of

**Kidney disease**, chronic renal failure, renal insufficiency, chronic kidney failure, and kidney insufficiency are all terms used to describe when the kidneys are not able to do some of their tasks anymore which include water conservation, toxin removal, calcium/phosphorus balance, sodium/potassium balance, blood pressure regulation, protein conservation, red blood cell production, pH balance, and urine specific gravity. Kidney disease can be better managed through appropriate diet and water intake, and by managing the secondary signs.



**Hyperthyroidism** develops when the thyroid glands (located in the neck) produce excessive amounts of thyroid hormone. This in turn causes a marked increase in the metabolic rate which puts strain on the heart and other organs. The typical signs of hyperthyroidism in cats are unexplained weight loss, increased appetite, restlessness, increased thirst and urination, and vomiting or diarrhea. Progression of the disease can cause hypertension (high blood pressure), thyrotoxic cardiomyopathy (heart muscle thickens), and retinal damage. Hyperthyroidism is diagnosed through certain blood tests. It can be treated 3 ways depending on what is most appropriate for the patient: life-long oral medication of methimazole, surgery to remove the affected thyroid gland(s), or radioactive iodine therapy given by injection to destroy abnormal thyroid tissue.

**Dental disease** is more common in felines than we imagined – just because they continue to eat, doesn't



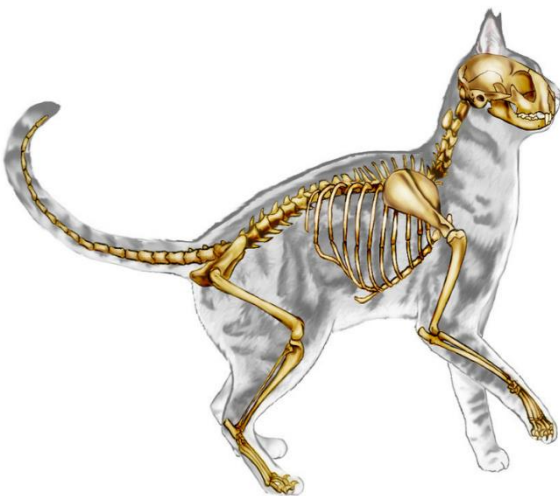
mean their mouths are feeling good! More than half of cats over the age of 3 have some form of dental disease... now imagine that number for our senior pets! Dental disease is more than tartar on the teeth. It is gum inflammation, tooth root abscesses, broken tooth roots, oral resorptive lesions, and hidden oral masses. Our senior felines should have regular professional dental scaling and radiographs under anesthetic, in addition to home oral care like brushing.

**Diabetes mellitus** is a disease of the pancreas, a small organ located near the stomach. The pancreas has two significant types of cells. One group of cells produces the enzymes necessary for proper digestion and the other produces the hormone insulin. Insulin regulates the level of glucose (sugar) in the bloodstream and controls the delivery of glucose to the tissues of the body. Diabetes mellitus is caused by the failure of the pancreas to regulate blood sugar. The four main symptoms of uncomplicated diabetes mellitus are increased thirst, increased urination, weight loss, and increased appetite. Diabetes is diagnosed through certain blood and urine tests and can be managed through appropriate diet and administering insulin.



**Vision and hearing loss** usually develops gradually in the aging pet, typically starting around 7 years old. Nuclear sclerosis (a buildup of fibre in the lens causing it to become denser and look cloudy) can mimic the appearance of a cataract, yet the eye with this condition can see and is not diseased. A true cataract is an opacity of the lens that cannot be seen through. If verbal communication with your pet is challenging, teaching hand signals will allow you to communicate visually instead. Although deaf pets can feel vibrations and smell/see their surroundings, they may become frightened by sudden approaches or unexpected petting, particularly when they are disturbed from sleep. Approach your pet with heavy footsteps, so the vibrations will alert them to your presence.

**Arthritis** is a complex condition involving inflammation of joints. Primary arthritis, also known as rheumatoid arthritis, is the less common form in veterinary patients. It is an immune mediated inflammatory condition where bone and cartilage are eroded within affected joints and can progress to complete joint fixation. Primary arthritis is usually treated with high doses of corticosteroids and immunosuppressive or cytotoxic agents. Secondary arthritis is the most common form in veterinary



patients, and results from joint instability that leads to subchondral bone damage. It can also be referred to as osteoarthritis (OA) or degenerative joint disease (DJD). Secondary arthritis is treated with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and nutraceuticals containing glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate. Infective or septic arthritis can be caused by a variety of microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi. This normally affects a single joint and results in swelling, fever, heat, and pain in the joint. Septic arthritis is treated by determining the microorganism responsible.

Acupuncture is a type of Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine (TCVM) used to treat pain in bones, ligaments, and muscles, as well as benefitting other diseases. Acupuncture is performed by inserting small, sterile needles into specific points on the body. Needles remain in place for 10 to 15 minutes. Weekly re-evaluation of your pet during initial treatment allows for the disease to reveal its layers and adjustments in the acupuncture points used, if needed. We recommend starting with 4 sessions, once a week, then maintenance treatments every 2 to 3 weeks. Dr. Jeun has taken extensive training in veterinary acupuncture and is pleased to offer this unique option to your dogs and cats.

An example of successful acupuncture treatment with Dr. Jeun:

A 9-year-old, female spayed terrier presented with right front leg lameness (limping). She was assessed by a veterinary neurologist who diagnosed possible right axilla neuritis (nerve inflammation) or right nerve sheath tumour. She was prescribed Tramadol and Gabapentin (pain medications), and Robaxin (muscle relaxant). These medications helped but the lameness persisted. She started 4 sessions of acupuncture, each 1 to 2 weeks apart, and improved with each treatment. She continued biweekly acupuncture treatments as needed. 9 months later, she was completely weaned off medications and back to her playful, non-limping self!