

Wilmette Pet Center

"the place for people who love pets"

With all the changes that goes on in an aging cat or dog's body, one of the most profound is the changes to their senses. Eyes, ears, hearing, and taste/smell all can fade separately, and can require some changes in their lifestyle. Understanding the process, and how to help prevent and delay it, is vital.

Hearing: As cats and dogs age, their hearing can start to fade. You might think that they're ignoring you, but there may be a real reason! A lot of animals begin to get crusty ears, which can exacerbate already weak hearing. Keep them clean and keep them dry! Clear, dry ears are healthy ears.



Use gentle, alcohol-free cleansers like [Vets Best](#) Ear Relief, with calendula and chamomile, to keep the ear passage clean on a daily basis. Astringent cleaners are needed for ears that get yeasty, and, if your pet's ears are inflamed (if they keep rubbing them or experience discomfort when you touch them), you may need to go to your vet and get medicated ear drops.

Eyes: Antioxidants are powerful compounds that help prevent damage to cells in the body. Like with so many things, begin them early to help prevent problems later in life. Keep your eye on their eyes, too. Some dogs can build up a lot of eye gunk; use a gentle cleanser daily to help keep their eyes clear. Many light colored dogs get those dark stains under their eyes. This is the result from bacteria in the hair follicles interacting with tear fluid. A natural treatment like Angel Eyes, added to their food, kills the bacteria and eliminates those stains. If you begin to see a milky blue film develop, make an appointment with your vet, as cataracts may need surgery to be removed.



TIP: If your pet's vision is starting to go, use their other senses to help them out! Consider lighting one type of candle at mealtimes, by their food, to help them find their dinner. Use the same type, only during meals, to help guide their nose to the bowl.

Taste/smell: As we discussed before, older cats and dogs can seem to experience a “disconnect” between their noses and their brain. Foods they used to love they suddenly turn their noses up at or quickly lose interest. This is, we believe, one of the easiest issues to address!



Offer a lot of appetite stimulants to entice them to eat. A rich canned food (like [Merrick's](#) line of savory, fun flavors) or some of our new [Orijen](#) or [Stella & Chewey](#) dehydrated diets can really give them reason to eat. Mix it up by offering a new flavor or an entirely new food. Broth, gravy, or goat's milk make great toppers and appetite stimulants. Warming their favorite food can bring out the flavor and aroma.

If they seem to be hesitant when eating their food, make sure you check their teeth, as bad and painful teeth will definitely affect their appetite. Keep those teeth healthy with our [line of dental products](#) (remember, February is Pet Dental Care month!)

It is not uncommon for older cats and dogs to move to a soft food diet – either canned or raw, as both are much easier for them to eat (easier to digest, too). We have tons of variety in foods, so we will find something your pet loves. And remember, there is no risk when you buy any of our foods with our 100% guarantee: if you or your pet do not love their new food, bring it right back to use and we'll switch it out for something else!

A great overall supplement for your aging pet (even a healthy one) is [Animal Apawthecary's Senior](#) blend. This tincture contains a natural blend of various herbs to help support the nervous, digestive, circulatory and immune functions in older dogs and cats.

Time can get even the best dog and cat. You are the most powerful force in your aging pet's health. You feed them the best of foods, give them the most fun toys, and you can make a real change to handle the new issues of age. And don't forget that your vet is one of your strongest allies in helping your aging pet. It's recommended that older pets see their vets every 6 months, and be sure to report any changes in behavior when you notice them.