

Ten Tips for Making Your Senior Cat Comfortable

Here are some ways to help your cats make the best of their golden years.

By Dusty Rainbolt

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Senior cats need a little more care and attention as the years go by. Here are some ways to make your "golden oldie" as comfortable and happy as possible. Vet visits twice a year
Because cats age at such a rapid rate compared to humans, the American Association of Feline Practitioners has recently revised its guidelines for senior cat care, recommending aging kitties be examined twice a year by their vets.

Give your cat a monthly health exam

By gently running your fingertips across every part of his body you can detect subtle changes like lumps, bumps and scabs. Check his weight. Note sensitive places your cat may not want you to touch. If you detect a change, see your vet.

Don't ignore behavioral or physical changes in your cat

They could indicate a looming health issue. Call your vet if you notice sudden weight loss or gain, bad breath, missing the litterbox, suddenly biting or scratching, or even a change of a sleeping spot.

Provide arthritis relief

Most cats over 12 have some level of joint discomfort. Ask your vet about medications or supplements that will help relieve arthritis pain. Provide ramps or steps so your senior doesn't have to jar aching joints by jumping up and down on beds and chairs.

Provide more litterboxes with low entrances

Make getting to the bathroom easier and less painful for your older kitty. Don't force your elderly cat to climb stairs to relieve himself.

Annual dental cleaning

Oral infections can lead to heart, liver and kidney disease. And dental disease can be agonizing. Your cat probably won't let on that he's in pain.

Switch to an age-appropriate diet

Senior cats have different dietary requirements from rambunctious kittens and active adults. Remember, obesity is a killer in cats as well as people. Too much weight stresses the joints and can contribute to a plethora of serious illnesses.

Provide a heated bed or window perch

This is especially if you live in a cold region.

Help out in the grooming department

Older kitties may get a little slack in the personal hygiene department. Lack of dexterity makes it harder to reach around to the more "personal" places. Also since he doesn't scratch his cat tree the way he used to, he may have problems with his nails growing into his pads. A quick (but gentle) daily brushing and monthly pedicure should keep him more comfortable.

Keep changes in the environment and stress to a minimum

Like older humans, geriatric cats don't like changes. Try to keep his environment as stress-free as possible. It's not a good time to get a rambunctious puppy.

Dusty Rainbolt's cat Basil made it to 21. Presently her Turkish Van, Herman, is 16. She is the award-winning cat writer and author of "Cat Wrangling Made Easy" and "Kittens for Dummies."