

Health and welfare information about your cat from Vetlexicon Felis.



Old age - caring for your elderly cat

A kitten is endearing to everyone but kittens grow up all too fast. By a year of age cats of all breeds will be mature. Although individual cats age at different rates, most 10 year old cats can be considered to be in old age.

How do I keep my cat healthy?

Just like older people, older cats slow down, they often take less exercise and may start to put on weight. Your cat may not want to go out as often as he once did. Many cats become more friendly as they get older, spending more time in the house with their family and enjoying attention. Occasionally older cats become grumpy. If your cat's behavior changes you should ask your veterinarian to check her over as this may be a sign of illness or pain.

Older cats need routine healthcare as much (if not more) than kittens. Regular vaccination is important throughout a cat's life as infectious diseases are easily prevented and can be very serious in older animals. Don't forget to treat your pet for worms and fleas.

Do older cats need special food?

If your cat is putting on weight you may need to reduce the amount of food that you give her, but some older cats may start to lose weight and may need more food (or better quality food). As cats get older their sense of smell and taste may be reduced and if your cats appetite seems poor - tempt her to eat by feeding richer, strong smelling foods. Older cats digest their food less well and may need to eat relatively more food to absorb all the nutrients they need. You should always have your cat examined by your veterinarian if she starts to gain or lose weight as this may be a sign of a medical condition that may need treatment. You can get special diets, designed for older cats, from your veterinarian. It is not necessary to give cats milk, but plenty of clean fresh water must always be available, as older cats often need to drink more. Increased thirst is often the first sign of illness in older cats so if your pet starts drinking more water, you should ask your veterinarian to examine them.

What diseases are common in older cats?

As our body gets older it starts to work less efficiently - the same is true for cats. Your cats heart or kidneys may not work as well as they once did or your cat may develop an overactive thyroid gland (hyperthyroidism). Your veterinarian will be able to help you manage these conditions as long as they see your cat before the disease becomes too advanced. If you are concerned about the health of an older cat make an appointment to see your veterinarian as soon as possible.

Is it fair to treat disease in an old cat?

Domestic cats may live for 20 years or more if well cared for and early veterinary attention may be able to sort out problems before they become serious. Age is not a reason to accept ill health and by keeping your cat well you can ensure that she has a good quality of life.

Conclusion

One of the joys of cats is their independence. As she gets older your cat needs you more than ever. You are the person who knows her better than anyone and you will be able to detect small changes that may indicate all is not well.