
An Owner's Manual for:
LIFE WITH
A SENIOR
CANINE CITIZEN

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this series - 3

What to do when Fido becomes a bit feeble - 4

Talk to your veterinarian - 10

Online resources at AKC.org -15

Other books in the series - 16

ABOUT THIS SERIES

At the AKC, we know better than anyone that your dog can't be treated like a car or an appliance, but we've named this series "An Owner's Manual" because sometimes you probably wish your lovable companions came with one.

These concise guides give you the tools, tips, and direction to be a responsible and confident dog owner who brings out the best in your dog. Give them a test drive!



chapter one

WHAT TO EXPECT
WHEN FIDO BECOMES
A BIT FEEBLE

what to expect when FIDO BECOMES A BIT FEEBLE

Your faithful companion no longer bounces with excitement when you reach for his leash. He no longer leaps at the chance to join you on the sofa. He appears to be grumpy at times.

The adorable puppy who instantly became a cherished member of the family is growing old. And the transformation seemed to happen so fast.



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what to expect when FIDO BECOMES A BIT FEEBLE

Dogs are considered “senior” at about seven years old. Larger dogs tend to have shorter life spans than smaller breeds, so they are often considered senior at 5 to 6 years of age. That’s not to say that older dogs lose their zest for life. They still can be active pets—thanks to advances in dog nutrition and veterinary medicine.

A graying muzzle and a slower pace are outward signs of aging, of course. But the best indication that a dog has become a senior is the emergence of age-related health problems.

Older dogs typically lose some of their sight and hearing—much like older humans. If your dog’s eyesight is failing, you should avoid rearranging or adding furniture or other items that could become obstacles. If your dog’s hearing is failing, you might need to communicate with him with hand signals and touch. Veterinarians also advise against disturbing a hear-impaired dog while asleep or from behind.

Weight gain in geriatric dogs is a concern because it increases the risk of health problems. Specialty foods, which contain more easily digestible ingredients and reduced caloric levels, are readily available for older dogs. As with older people, older dogs need an appropriate amount of exercise to help maintain a proper weight, muscle tone and mobility.

what to expect when FIDO BECOMES A BIT FEEBLE

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what to expect when FIDO BECOMES A BIT FEEBLE

Keep in mind that older dogs are susceptible to dehydration, so it's very important to ensure that your dog always has access to fresh water. Of course, as an older dog takes in more water, he will need to relieve himself more often.

Grooming is particularly important for older dogs. Regular brushing not only keeps an older dog's coat and skin from becoming dry, it also helps his owner spot any lumps, tumors or other abnormalities that should be brought to the attention of a veterinarian.



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what to expect when FIDO BECOMES A BIT FEEBLE

As a dog ages, he is likely to lose some teeth and may develop bad breath. Still, keeping his teeth clean and free of tartar decreases the chances that he will develop such serious problems as tooth decay and heart disease.

Diseases of the heart, kidney and liver are more likely to develop as a dog grows old. Cancer and arthritis are common afflictions of senior dogs. Cancer accounts for almost half of the deaths of pets over 10 years of age. Dogs are afflicted with cancer at roughly the same rate as humans.





chapter two
TALK TO YOUR
VETERINARIAN

talk to your VETERINARIAN

Veterinarians advise dog owners to watch for these common signs of cancer in dogs:

- An abnormal swelling that persists or continues to grow
- Sores that do not heal
- Weight loss
- Bleeding or discharge from any opening in the body
- Loss of appetite
- Offensive mouth odor
- Difficulty eating or swallowing
- Hesitation or refusal to exercise and a loss of stamina
- Difficulty breathing, urinating or defecating

If your dog exhibits any of these indicators, you obviously should have your pet examined by your veterinarian, who can accurately make a diagnosis on the basis of X-rays, blood tests or a biopsy.

The majority of canine cancers can be surgically removed, veterinarians say. Many breast cancers, mast cell tumors, skin tumors, soft tissue sarcomas can be successfully treated with surgery. Furthermore, many treatments available to humans are being used on dogs. Radiation therapy is available at many facilities around the county. Chemotherapy is increasingly being administered.

talk to your VETERINARIAN

Older dogs are particularly vulnerable to arthritis and joint diseases. Bigger dogs tend to be more predisposed to such maladies. Some dogs suffer breed-specific problems. Newfoundlands have the highest prevalence of cruciate ligament disease. Rottweilers have more knee and ankle problems. Bernese Mountain dogs commonly get elbow dysplasia.

Common indicators of arthritis and joint disease in dogs are:

- A tendency to favor a limb
- Difficulty sitting or standing
- An increase in time asleep
- Hesitancy to jump, run or climb stairs
- Weight gain
- Decreased interest in play
- Irritability

Severe arthritis and joint disease can be treated surgically with an arthroscopic cleaning of the joint (which works wonders for professional athletes) or the more radical total joint replacement.

But less invasive treatment might be all that's needed. Veterinarians might suggest a weight management plan for the dog to reduce stress on joints and therapy to strengthen muscle to help protect joints. There also are various types of foods and food additives that can help, such as fish oils and glucosamine/chondroitin.

Additionally, veterinarians might recommend anti-inflammatories, analgesics and pain relievers.

talk to your VETERINARIAN

Owners of older dogs might wonder whether changes in their pet's behavior could be indicative of dementia or Alzheimer's disease. In the early 1990s, researchers first identified brain changes in older dogs that were similar to changes seen in people with Alzheimer's disease. Laboratory tests also were conducted during that time to detect learning and memory deficits in older dogs.

Dog owners who suspect their aging pet is showing signs of a cognitive dysfunction should consult their veterinarian, who might recommend specific drugs or diets that can mitigate the problem.

Veterinarians suggest that senior dogs be examined at least once a year to detect health problems before they become acute and costly to treat.

One of your primary responsibilities as an owner of an older dog is to ensure that he is comfortable. It's important that he have a soft bed, but one that provides enough support to ease his aches and pains. The bed should be kept in a quiet place, away from drafts.



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talk to your VETERINARIAN

Veterinarians also recommend that your older dog stay active for as long as possible. Take walks and play fetch, if he's up to it. Perhaps it doesn't need to be said, but the best thing you can do for your senior dog is to give him the same amount of attention and affection that you lavished upon him when you brought him home as a puppy.



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THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

The AKC is a not-for-profit organization and the largest purebred dog registry in the world. We are the sports-governing body for over 22,000 dog events a year, including conformation (dog shows) and exciting sports like agility, obedience, rally, tracking, lure coursing, earthdog, herding trials, among others.

But the AKC is so much more. Here are just some of the ways we support and enrich the lives of dogs—purebreds and mixed-breeds alike—and their families.

[AKC Humane Fund](#), supports breed rescue activities, assists shelters that permit domestic-abuse victims to bring their pets, and educates dog lovers about responsible dog ownership.

[Canine Good Citizen®](#) program : A 10-step test that certifies dogs who have good manners at home and in their community. Over 600,000 dogs across the United States have become Canine Good Citizens , and 42 states have passed resolutions recognizing the program's merit and importance.

[AKC Reunite](#) has brought more than 400,000 lost pets back together with their owners.

The [AKC Canine Health Foundation](#), funds research projects and clinical studies. Since 1995 the AKC has donated over \$24 million to the CHF. (The AKC is the only registry that incorporates health-screening results into its permanent dog records.)

[AKC](#) conducts thousands of kennel inspections annually to monitor care and conditions at kennels across the country and ensure the integrity of the AKC registry.

We offer the largest, most comprehensive set of DNA programs for parentage verification and genetic identity to ensure reliable registration records.

AKC supports one of the world's largest collections of dog-related fine art and artifacts at the [AKC Museum of the Dog](#),

We have the world's largest [dog library](#) at AKC headquarters in New York, both of which are open to the public.

THANK YOU FOR READING

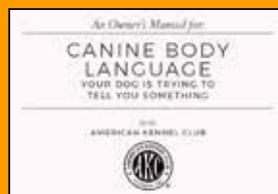
We hope this information was valuable to you in helping your puppy live a long, healthy, happy life. Below, find additional books in our Owner's Manual series designed to strengthen the bond between you and your furry family member.



5 TRICKS TO SHOW OFF



AGILITY FOR BEGINNERS



CANINE BODY LANGUAGE



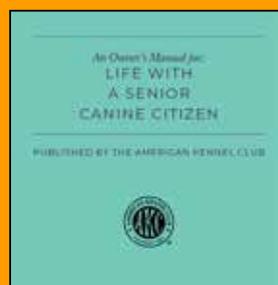
CANINE GOOD CITIZEN



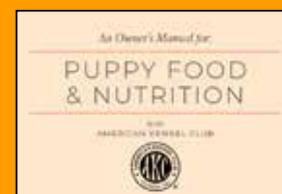
FIRST AID FOR DOGS



HOW TO CRATE TRAIN YOUR DOG



LIFE WITH A SENIOR DOG



PUPPY NUTRITION



SELECTING A PUPPY



5 BASIC COMMANDS



RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNER TIPS



WHY DOES MY DOG DO THAT?



WHAT'S HE THINKING?



PUPPY SOCIALIZATION