

SENILITY

As your pet gets older, he or she may develop problems associated with brain ageing. Just like the rest of the body, the brain is affected by the ageing process. Free radicals that are produced by the body's metabolism, environmental pollutants and ultra-violet light cause damage to cells. This damage to the brain cells can lead to changes in your dog's behaviour.

50% of all dogs aged eight years and older will show some signs of brain ageing. Changes in brain function occur very slowly. At first you may notice small differences in behaviour like irritability and lack of energy, but these changes may progress and start interfering with your dog's everyday life. Some of the signs commonly seen in pets with senility are:

Disorientation

- Appears lost, even in familiar surroundings
- Fails to recognise familiar people or places
- Decreased alertness and aimless behaviour

Less Interactive

- No longer keen to greet family members
- Doesn't seek attention or petting

Disturbed Sleep Patterns

- Sleeps more during the day and/or less during the night
- Wanders round the house at night
- May vocalize and howl particularly at night

Toileting Problems

- Doesn't ask to go outside
- Frequent accidents indoors
- Loss of bladder or bowel control

Irritability and/or anxiety

Decreased appetite

Little can be done to stop free radicals being produced, but with the aid of medicines and special diets we can help to limit the progression of brain ageing. In dogs, Hills b/d dry food has been clinically proven to slow the progression of brain ageing. It contains antioxidant vitamins and minerals that protect brain cells against free radicals and added fish oils help to support the brain as it ages. Many owners see an improvement in their dog's behaviour within six weeks of feeding hills b/d. We can also use medications that help to increase the blood supply to the brain and help to improve the symptoms of senility.

There are unfortunately no diets or medications to aid in the control of senility in cats.

If you have noticed any changes in your dog's behaviour or suspect that they may be affected by brain ageing, please contact the clinic to organise an appointment with one of our vets.