

## Focus on the Ageing Dog

Some memories remain forever emblazoned in our minds, as they were associated with such powerful emotions at the time. Growing up on a farm with a horde of happy mutts, we used to take the whole crew for a run (behind the bakkie of course) to the river. We loved to watch them all in full flight. I recall one day as my dad stopped and dropped the tail gate to let them jump on I asked him to let them run a little more. When he told me they were tired I pointed out that they were still running! Of course in my mind, when you're tired, you stop running. Dogs are different he explained, they are loyal and will follow their master until they drop with fatigue. I cannot describe how this struck me. It changed the entire way in which I viewed the canine kind. I can understand why Mark Twain said that a dog is the only thing that loves you more than he loves himself!

So if your beloved pet is getting old, it may become more and more difficult for him to honour this loyalty. His greatest call in life is to be your trusted companion. Arthritis, heart disease, hormone diseases, lung diseases, kidney diseases and cancers all afflict our "senior citizen" pets. Often the signs of these problems are not obvious, because their drive to serve as a loyal companion outweighs their sense of being aware of their own physical constraints. Bear in mind that a yorkie or dachsie will fearlessly attack 5 thugs to protect its master. With this in mind it is our responsibility (much like a wife dragging a husband to the Dr for a check!) to be proactive about the ageing pets health and wellbeing.

At Hilton vet we are passionate about preserving the health and dignity of an ageing pet. Many of us have experienced the pain of having to let go of one of our old pets.

So what can I do to prolong the health of my ageing pet?

Have your old dog checked twice yearly to assess the teeth, heart, lungs and examine for lumps and bumps. If your dog has a reduced appetite, a chest x-ray or an abdominal scan may help to pick up problems like cancer early when they can still be successfully treated. At an annual vaccination ensure that your vet does a thorough check. At Hilton Vet we have a standard 40 point clinical exam for all pets' physical examinations. A 6 monthly in-between check can be done by one of our nurses (free to our Hilton Vet clients) to screen for problems, and to decide if a check with one of the vets is necessary. If your old dog is on chronic medication such as anti-inflammatories, we have a fully equipped laboratory to perform screening blood tests as necessary to ensure the ongoing safety of the medication being used.

Hilton clients are welcome to book our nurse Debbie (033 343 4602) to discuss the management of the senior pet. With our help and your care we hope to keep your old shadow plodding behind you for many years to come!