



Adopting a Senior Pet

Puppies and kittens are so cute and spunky; it is hard to imagine them without getting a warm, fuzzy feeling. Unfortunately we tend to forget that there are many wonderful, loving, senior pets out there also looking for a loving home. The following is an article recently published in *The Daily Record* that had such good advice that we felt it was worth reprinting.

Dear Abby: We are seniors like "Thinking about adopting in Las Vegas" (Feb 2) who want to adopt a dog. He may find it difficult to adopt one, especially since big hearts and lots of love and patience many times aren't considered "enough" today. We were denied every dog we wanted to adopt until a volunteer at Petfinder.com advised us that considering our ages, we should adopt a senior dog. We took the advice and have been blessed with 9-year-old Benji for almost a year. Puppies are like grandchildren—full of love, but they leave us seniors exhausted. Senior dogs nap, are more mellow than puppies and are usually housebroken... Benji's Parents in Washington State

Dear Benji's Parents: Thank you for supporting the adoption of older dogs. Readers provided some doggone good resources for adopting or acting as a foster parent for an abandoned or abused dog.

Dear Abby: In most states people can now create a trust for their pet. They can put funds into it and, in this way, benefit their pet by naming a trustee and caretaker to assure it will be taken care of until it passes away. In the trust they can state all their wishes, as singer Dusty Springfield did in stating she wanted her dog fed only imported baby food, its bed lined with her nightgowns and her records played when it went to sleep. Marc S. in Cleveland

Dear Abby: Most Humane Societies now offer a "senior for senior" discount where a qualified senior citizen can adopt a senior companion animal, usually 7 years old or older, with all the fees waived. Please tell "Thinking" that he can find what he's looking for in companionship, and a middle-aged or older dog that would usually be passed up at the pound will get a new leash on life. Tanna, Diamond Bar, California

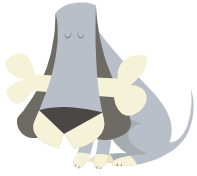
Dear Abby: Many dog rescues need kind, loving foster homes for abused and abandoned animals who are awaiting adoption. It is hard to give up a dog after you have fostered and taken care of it for a while, and you do have the option of adopting it yourself, but believe me, this is definitely a worthwhile cause. When you take in a foster, their eyes are dull. But after receiving love and attention from a caregiver, those eyes sparkle and you know you have done something wonderful. Jillie, Humble, TX

Dear Abby: After practicing as a vet for 35 years, may I offer a suggestion to your readers? Wonderful older pets are put to sleep every day at shelters across the country. These pets are usually house-trained, leash-trained, calm and eager for love and attention. Puppies and kittens, on the other hand, need constant attention, training and activity. Visit a pet shelter, and you may find your "perfect" companion patiently waiting for your love. Ken Cohn, Tuscon, Ariz.



Did you know...

- The only two animals that can see behind itself without turning its head are the rabbit and the parrot.
- The average dog can learn 165 words, including signals, and those in the top 20% of dog intelligence can learn 250 words.- Medical News Today
- Review of 20 years of U.S. survey data found that people who owned cats at some point in their lives, tended to have a lower risk of dying from heart attacks.-HHS HealthBeat
- Children living in a house with 2 or more dogs or cats during their first year of life are much less likely to develop allergic diseases compared to children without pets.- Live Science
- A national survey shows that 84% of Americans aged 60 and older who own a pet report that pets make them feel happy, 66% said owning a pet improves their memory, and 45% said that after adopting a pet they started spending more time doing physical activities. -PRNewswire
- A cat has 32 muscles in each ear. A cats jaw cannot move sideways. Cats have over one hundred vocal sounds.
- Cats purr at about 26 cycles per second, the same frequency as an idling diesel engine.
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt's most famous canine companion was his Scottish Terrier, Fala, who is part of the Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C. But during Roosevelt's 12 years and one month as president, 11 dogs lived in the White House. They included a Bullmastiff, two red setters, a retriever, a Bulldog, a Llewelin Setter, a Scotch Terrier, a Great Dane, a Sheepdog, and a German Shepherd who tried to rip the pants off the British Prime Minister.
- The English Romantic poet Lord Byron was so devastated upon the death of his beloved Newfoundland, whose name was Boatswain, that he had inscribed upon the dog's gravestone the following: "Beauty without vanity, strength without insolence, courage without ferocity, and all the virtues of man without his vices."
- Winston Churchill, adored cats. Churchill used to refer to his cat, "Jock", as his special assistant. "Jock" was reported to be on the bed with his master on the day the great British statesman died.
- In the midst of building the Grand Coulee Dam in the state of Washington, engineers were stymied by the problem of threading a cable through a pipeline until an anonymous cat saved the day. Harnessed to the cable, this unknown hero crawled through the pipeline maze to successfully finish the job.
- Who first thought of using dogs to guide blind people? At the end of World War I, the German government trained the first guide dogs to assist blind war veterans.
- Dogs do not have as many taste buds as we do, they have about 1,700 on their tongues while humans have about 9,000. They have over 200 million scent receptors in their noses and humans have only 5 million.



Joint Pain: Treat it, Don't mask it

Joint disorder is the #1 chronic condition affecting up to 25% of dogs. Yet less than 15% of dogs afflicted with joint disease actually receive care, thus reducing the quality of life for the animal. Injury, repeated stress, excess weight, poor diet, and genetic predisposition can contribute to unhealthy joints. There are effective treatment options available and significant differences among them.

When the healthy joint becomes unhealthy

In healthy conditions, the natural joint building blocks, cartilage and synovial fluid, reduce friction and act as a shock absorber. The body makes these joint building blocks normally by producing glycosaminoglycans, or GAGs. These GAGs consist of glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate and hyaluronic acid. In the unhealthy joint, production of these joint building blocks is impaired. The animal's body is unable to keep up with demand for building blocks, resulting in irritation, inflammation, pain, and decreased mobility.

Common signs of unhealthy joints

Pet owners can easily recognize signs of unhealthy joints in their dog or cat. For dogs, one might notice decreased endurance, stiffness following activities, inability to jump into the car or onto furniture, hesitation getting up, difficulty with stairs, and stumbles or "bunny hops". Cats tend to show signs of joint disorder by reduced grooming, due to pain when twisting or turning. Cat owners may also notice long and overgrown toenails, since scratching hurts toes and feet. Also joints may be swollen and seem painful when touched.

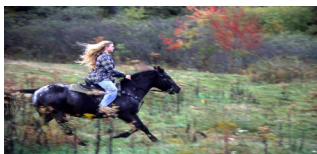
Treatment options

Pet owners have many options to treat unhealthy joints in their dogs and cats, but they fall primarily into two different categories. There are pharmaceutical, or drug, options and there are natural alternatives. Drug options include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which block the production of prostaglandins associated with pain and inflammation; COX-2 inhibitors, which target specific prostaglandins, and Aspirin/Ascripton, which reduces pain. These drugs are very good at blocking pain and decreasing inflammation. They do not however add to the body's joint lubricants or biochemical process.

Natural treatment, used alone or with a drug option, has demonstrative benefits. The Natural process supplies the body with the joint building blocks, glucosamine, chondroitin and hyaluronic acid. This is what the pet's body would provide in a healthy situation.

Choosing the best treatment

If a dog or cat with unhealthy joints receives no treatment, recovery is not likely due to continuing pain, swelling and the body's inability to produce enough of the joint building blocks. This will lead to a less comfortable and less active life for the pet. Pharmaceutical options for treatment are highly effective and require careful monitoring with regular blood work. Natural options should be chosen carefully because some may have added ingredients that may be harmful to your pet. Working closely with your veterinarian is advised to find the best plan of treatment for your pet's needs.



Equine Wellness Program

Call our office for details on this comprehensive package designed to make routine health care simple and easy.



Feeding your pet: How much is too much?

As every loving pet owner knows, it is hard to resist a furry face begging for a special treat. We look into those big brown eyes, hear that hopeful purr, and feel that the best way to reward all that devotion is by giving our best pal something to eat.

In reality, though, this is often the worst way to repay our pet's affection. When treats make up too much of a pet's diet, the nutritional balance of an otherwise healthy diet can be upset. Too many treats can also lead to obesity, which increases the risk for other serious health problems, including osteoarthritis, diabetes (in cats), heart and respiratory diseases, and many types of cancers. Overweight pets are also at increased risk for complications during anesthesia if they need to undergo surgery or other procedures. And if a pet already has a health condition, obesity makes the problem that much harder to manage. Despite these concerns, however, pet obesity has become something of an epidemic in the United States.

Apart from contributing to potentially dangerous health conditions, obesity can affect your pet's overall comfort and quality of life. Being overweight can lower your pet's energy level and hamper his or her ability to enjoy an active lifestyle with you and your family.

What causes obesity?

Obesity results when an animal eats more calories than it burns off during normal activities or exercise. Factors that can contribute to obesity include:

- Overfeeding or overeating
- Feeding table scraps
- Inactivity or low activity levels
- Breed
- Age
- Reproductive status (intact versus spayed/neutered)
- Preexisting diseases (e.g., hypothyroidism, diabetes mellitus, Cushing's disease)



Managing the battle of the bulge

- Feed a well-balanced, veterinarian-approved diet.
- When you treat your pet, give healthy treats.
- Make sure your pet gets plenty of regular age-and health-appropriate exercise.
- Don't allow your pet to have unrestricted access to food-it's own or another pet's.
- Make sure all family members are on the same page when it comes to feeding and treating your pet.
- Consider feeding several small meals over the course of a day, rather than only once or twice; this may reduce an animal's desire to scavenge.
- Treats and snacks should be portioned out in small amounts, no bigger than the size of your thumbnail.
- Purchase a toy, such as a Kong, that can hold small pieces of kibble and use it as a means to provide exercise and some of the pet's daily calories.
- Take your pet to Doggie Daycare where they can run and play with their friends instead of laying around sleeping all day.