

# Six Things to do With Your Senior Dog!

When we share our lives with a senior pet, we come to realise just how precious the time we have with them is. Below, you'll find ways to infuse fun into their golden years in light of their changing physical needs.

Despite their efforts not to, even the highest energy dogs start to slow down as they drift into the later stages of their life. Although they would never want you to know it, getting older means your senior pet's needs and abilities change. The time you spend playing with your pet now, will be a little different from the play time you shared when they were young. That said, the love dogs have for play is ageless! Whether they're 4 or 14, 'dogs just want to have fun'. Below are 6 ways to continue the fun while ensuring your pet continues to lead a safe and healthy life as a senior citizen.

## 1. Car Rides

Car rides are still a great option for dogs who loved them in their youth. Many dogs delight in watching the scenery zoom by and in being exposed to all the scents of the world around them. Depending on where you're going, they may or may not get out at the destination for a short adventure. But maybe for your pooch, it's about the journey and not the destination - they will most likely just enjoy the ride!

## 2. Walking

Obesity can exacerbate joint pain and conditions such as arthritis. Help your pet avoid this with walks that are on the not so wild side. Start slow and short. Ten minutes can be plenty depending on your dog. Many senior dogs forget their limits and will try to keep up with you even if they're sore or tired. Two to three short walks a day is often a more fitting choice than one long walk. Keep water available and avoid walking when it's particularly hot or humid.

## 3. Swimming

Being low impact makes swimming a particularly beneficial activity for the golden oldies. Few exercises are better for a senior dog than swimming. It provides an aerobic workout that targets their muscles, joints and ligaments without strain!

But remember, senior dogs tend to tire easier and get colder quicker than their younger selves. Be sure to keep a close eye on your pension-aged paddler!

## 4. Scent Games

Ageing can include deterioration of your pet's vision and hearing, but their ability to smell? It often remains strong! Take advantage, use their famous sense of

smell to play scenting games. It's a low impact, in home activity that dogs can play well into their golden years. Start by placing some fine smelling treats underneath plastic cups, containers or boxes on the floor and encourage your pet to uncover them, rewarding with lots of pats when they do. \*Remember treats are treats, moderation is key!

## **5. Human Touch**

No pet is ever too old for a little TLC! Physical contact is really important to older dogs. Spending some time engaging with them physically through pats and hugs not only helps them feel the love, it also gives you a chance to monitor the condition of their coat and keep an eye on the development of any lumps or abnormalities. Learning how to give them therapeutic massages is another great option. Every moment you have together is precious and you'll be glad you spent the time strengthening your bond through touch.

## **6. Therapy Work**

Is your senior pet healthy and of good temperament? Delta Therapy work could be a wonderful way for the two of you to bond. It also has the added benefit of bringing joy to others. It's a win-win-win - providing a feel-good factor for yourself and the recipient as well as fun and stimulation for your four-legged family member. Being suited to sociable, calm temperaments, therapy work is a made to order activity for many older dogs. Interested? Find out more about Delta Therapy by going on line.

## **A final note**

Keep in mind that just like for humans, exclusion hurts. Older pets left home alone and excluded are prone to boredom and depression. Try to bring them on some of your outings, even if it means adapting some of your activities to suit them.

One of the best things you can do with your senior pet is to just spend time with them. Put your phone down, turn off the TV and offer a little TLC. Cherish the time you have with your pet – you never know how much they have left.

## **On quality of life**

Your pet can still find great enjoyment in their final years. Assisting them through a proper diet, exercise, medications and treatments like acupuncture, massage and myotherapy can go a HUGE way in improving their quality of life and allowing them to continue enjoying some of their favourite things in comfort.

**Could your senior pet benefit from some added support? Feel free to give our friendly vet team a call, we'd love to chat!**