

Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (Dementia)

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Overview

Dementia, also known as senility or cognitive dysfunction, is a change in behavior seen in older dogs. Some feel it may be a normal aging change, however there appears to be a substantially accelerated form of dementia seen in some dogs.

The two most common complaints of owners with senile dogs are loss of housetraining and wandering during normal sleep time.

Cognitive dysfunction is seen in male and female dogs of all breeds that are at least 10 years old or older. The problem is progressive and the cause is unknown.

Dogs with cognitive dysfunction can disrupt their family's routine with the house soiling, vocalization, wandering, and diminished family interaction.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Dementia is generally diagnosed by history and physical examination findings. There are behaviors that are typical for dogs with dementia. To rule out underlying disorders, bloodwork and x-rays may be recommended. In some cases, CT or MRI may be beneficial.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Some dogs benefit from behavior modification exercises and some can improve on medications such as deprenyl (Anipryl). Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

What to Watch for*:

- Lameness
- Decreased interaction with the family
- Increased irritability
- Slowness in obeying commands
- Alterations in sleep-wake cycle
- Decreased responsiveness to sensory input problems performing previously learned behaviors

**Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*