



A puppy is endearing to everyone but puppies grow up all too fast. By one to two years of age dogs of all breeds will be mature. Although individual dogs and some breeds age at different rates, most 10 year old dogs can be considered to be in old age, and many breeds show signs of ageing much more quickly.

How do I keep my dog healthy?

Just like older people, older dogs slow down, they often take less exercise and may start to put on weight. Your dog may not want to go out as often as he once did. Many dogs become more friendly as they get older, spending more time with their family and enjoying attention. Occasionally older dogs may become grumpy. If your dog's behaviour changes you should ask your vet to check him over as this may be a sign of illness or pain.

Older dogs need routine health care as much (if not more) than puppies. Regular vaccination is important throughout a dog's life as infectious diseases are easily prevented and can be very serious in older animals. Don't forget to treat your pet for worms and fleas.

Do older dogs need special food?

If your dog is putting on weight you may need to reduce the amount of food that you give him, but some older dogs may start to lose weight and may need more food (or better quality food). As dogs get older their sense of smell and taste may be reduced and if your dog's appetite is poor - tempt him to eat by feeding richer, strong smelling foods. Older dogs digest their food less well and may need to eat relatively more food to absorb all the nutrients they need. You should always have your dog examined by your vet if he starts to gain or lose weight as this may be a sign of a medical condition that may need treatment. You can get special diets, designed for older dogs from your vet. Plenty of clean fresh water must always be available as older dogs often need to drink more.

What diseases do older dogs get?

As our body gets older it starts to work less efficiently - the same is true for dogs. Your dog's heart or kidneys may not work as well as they once did, or your dog may develop growths on the skin or inside his body. Your vet will be able to help you manage these conditions as long as he sees your dog before the disease becomes too advanced. If you are concerned about the health of an older dog, make an appointment to see your vet as soon as possible.

Is it fair to treat disease in an old dog?

Although most larger breed dogs have a life-span of approximately 10 years, smaller breeds may live for 20 years or more and if your vet sees any problems early he may be able to sort them out before they become serious. Age is not a reason to accept ill health and by keeping your dog well you can ensure that he has a good quality of life.

Conclusion

Your relationship with your dog is a very special one - many people regard their dog as a friend and part of the family. As your dog gets older he needs you more than ever. You are the person who knows him better than anyone and you will be able to detect small changes which may indicate that all is not well.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your dog please contact Orwell Veterinary Group on 01473 333677 and we will be happy to advise you.