

# Your Pet's Home Health Check

**General Considerations**

**NO YES**

**Appetite & Thirst**

Has appetite altered recently

Has there been an increase in thirst

**Weight**

Has there been a significant loss of weight

Is the abdomen distended

Is the backbone more prominent

**Stool**

Is the stool frequently soft

Are there any straining to pass a stool

Is there an increase in urination

**Behaviour**

Are there any signs of disorientation

Has there been a change in temperament

**Routine Examination**

It is useful to perform a routine nose-to-tail examination on your pet, some points to note are:

**Nose**

Contrary to popular belief wetness is of little importance

Is there a thick nasal discharge

Is there persistent sneezing/snuffling

Is there crustiness around the nose

**Mouth**

Lift the lips, examine the gums and teeth, open the mouth

Is the tongue either pale or bluish

Are the gum margins red, swollen or irregular

Is there an offensive smell

Is there visible deposit on the teeth

**No Yes**

Does pressing the teeth or gums evoke pain

**Eyes**

*Gently part upper and lower lids*

Is the front of the eye (cornea) not clear

Do the pupils or irises differ in colour or size

Are the whites of the eyes discoloured

Is there any discharge from the eyes

**Ears**

*Lift the ear flap and look down the ear canal*

Is there visible discharge

Is there an offensive smell from the ear

**Chest & Breathing**

Is breathing more noticeable at rest

Does exercise result in breathlessness

Is there a recurrent or persistent cough

Has your pet ever fainted

**Skin**

*Run a finger against the hair to examine the skin*

Is there any thinning of the coat

Is the skin blotchy or scabby

Are there any lumps in the skin

**Limbs & Exercise**

Is getting up after rest difficult

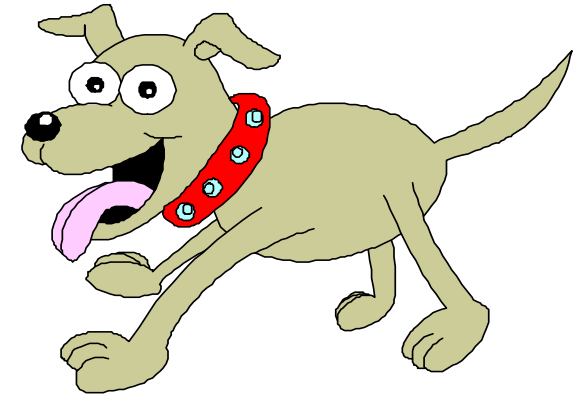
Is there a reluctance to jump up or down

Is there any unevenness of gait

Is exercise ability significantly diminished

## What it Means

There are two parts to this assessment, firstly the overall demeanour - how is he "in himself", then the examination of the visible organs. If you do this regularly you will help early diagnosis treatment and longevity. IF THE ANSWER TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS IS YES, SEE A VET. Early diagnosis of illness will always make treatment quicker and easier. Early diagnosis often relies on owner observation and recognition that something has changed. The cloudiness of a pupil from cataract, the increased number of visits to the water bowl of kidney failure.



*If the answer's yes,  
see a vet*

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# The Older Pet

It is important to be able to distinguish the normally old animal from the old unwell animal if we want to prolong life.

Although there are breed variations in what might be considered "old", for veterinary purposes however, it is usual to consider old as being over eight years of age.

## Signs of ageing organs

### Heart & Circulation

Heart disease is relatively common for both dogs and cats. Smaller dogs often get heart valve leakage, whereas larger dogs and cats are more prone to heart muscle disease. Dogs usually become increasingly breathless, and less able to exercise. They may develop a persistent cough. Heart failure in cats is less obvious, their inactivity is often attributed to age, whilst their increased respiratory rate may go unnoticed.

### Kidneys and Liver

Dogs commonly show signs of liver disease with age whilst cats are more prone to kidney failure. Both may be noticed as an increase in thirst and urine production, sometimes with weight loss.

### Skin

Although coats may lose some of their lustre with age there are many dermatological conditions of the old animal. Cushing's disease is one such due to an overproduction of cortisol resulting in hair loss, similarly thyroid deficiency will result in alopecia.

### Joints and Muscles

Old animals are usually less mobile. There may be a combination of arthritis, muscular weakness and nerve failure contributing to poor limb function. Arthritis is usually painful and can be alleviated with appropriate medication.

### Nervous System

Although some loss of brain function is attributable to age, old animals may develop brain disorders particularly tumours resulting in slowness, changes in

behaviour or altered locomotion.

### Eyesight

Some causes of progressive blindness can be slowed down or even reversed. Dogs with cataracts can have eyesight restored sometimes greatly improving quality of life.

### Teeth and Gums

Progressive build up of tartar on the teeth results in gum and tooth infections. There is evidence that this is a strong contributing factor in kidney and heart failure in cats and dogs. Not only must rotten mouths be uncomfortable, cleaner teeth may mean a longer life.

### Cancers

Although far less common than feared, all older animals may develop tumours. Any new swellings should be looked at.

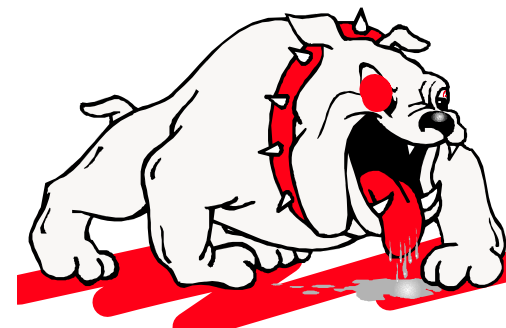
### Obesity

A gradual increase in weight over life may result in an obese geriatric. You should be able to feel individual ribs and the tips of each backbone on gentle stroking. If you cannot your pet may be overweight adding stress to the heart and limbs.



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## Checking Your Pet



### Hamilton Pet Clinic

110 Boundary Road  
St. John's Wood NW8 0171 722 3381

### Park Pet Clinic

116 Regents Park Road  
Finchley N3 0181 343  
1433

### Primrose Hill Pet Clinic

138 Gloucester Avenue  
NW1 0171 586 8806

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