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Independent, Kind and Honest Veterinary Care in the Heart of Ryedale

Canine Senility

As pet dogs are reaching much older ages than in the past, more and more cases of canine senility are being noted. As with older people, this may range from absent-mindedness to more bizarre behaviours. Some of the more commonly seen behaviours are listed below:

- Restlessness and waking at night
- Barking for no particular reason, especially at night
- Confusion, e.g. asking to be fed despite having been offered food shortly before, pacing around the house with no purpose, barking at well known family members as if they are strangers, not recognising familiar places.
- Disorientation, e.g. getting lost in familiar places or getting stuck in corners or rooms.
- Reduced interaction and playing with people, increased daytime sleeping.
- Inappropriate house soiling, e.g. messing in the house despite ready access to outdoors.

If your dog suffers from a number of these then the chances are they have canine senility. All animals (and people) produce harmful chemicals called free radicals. Naturally they produce antioxidants to reduce these, but as they get older the levels of free radicals increase and the antioxidants deteriorate.

The solution to these problems is to supplement your dog's diet with antioxidants. The supplement we recommend is a product called Aktivait (produced by VetPlus, www.vet-plus.co.uk). It is a formula of antioxidants and compounds to maintain healthy brain function, and comes in a capsule form which is sprinkled on food. It has a loading period of 3-4 weeks before its benefits will be fully seen, and often results in marked improvements in the behaviour and quality of life of older dogs.

Another drug which may be used is called Vivitonin (MSD Animal Health, www.msd-animal-health.co.uk). It works to increase blood flow to the brain and increase oxygenation of brain cells, increasing their function. Senility can disturb the whole household, and result in family members getting upset with the loved family pet, at times even considering euthanasia if symptoms start getting too severe. However there are options that can be explored and these should always be discussed with your vet to avoid any rash decisions.