

A-OK9

SENIOR DOG BIBLE

**Health and Nutrition for
the older Dog**



@aok9official



A-OK9.com



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Diet is key to maintaining vitality

It's safe to say that one of the worst parts of dog ownership is when we notice the signs of age on our once lively companions.

Although it's not possible to completely stop our dogs ageing, luckily there are things we can do as owners to keep our dogs as sharp, as happy and as mobile as we can, for as long as possible.

One of the best ways to maintain your dog's vitality is to harness the power of nutrition.

Making sure that your Senior dog is supported with optimal nutrition can drastically improve both quality and quantity of life and give them an obvious pep to their step.

This is why we (at A-OK9) have developed Calm-K9 Senior Boost, a supplement designed specifically for the Senior Dog. With our amazing nutrition team, we have selected the optimal ingredients to develop the best possible Senior supplement out there.

The Calm-K9 Senior Boost supplement, has been designed to have a noticeable impact on your Senior Dog's day to day life. Our focus is brain health, which can deteriorate as dogs age. We aim to support senior dogs' brain function by providing the perfect combination of vitamins and minerals to maintain normal cognitive function. Find out more below.

What's in CalmK9 Senior Boost?

VITAMIN B

Vitamin B is an essential part of your dog's diet. It's one of the most powerful ingredients to support cognitive function and plays a significant role in your senior dog's brain function, in encouraging their body to remain healthy and young by keeping their energy regulated.

VITAMIN B6

Vitamin B6 can boost the response of the immune system and gives their nervous system the support it needs.

VITAMIN C

Vitamin C keeps dogs' brains sharp and helps slow the progression of cognitive decline. This is so important for a senior dog and is the reason why Vitamin B and C ingredients that were prioritised in the creation of Calm K9 Senior Boost.

L-CARNITINE

L-Carnitine not only aids eye or vision health, it can also help to improve energy!



Calm-K9 Senior Boost takes the hassle out of senior dog nutrition. It comes as an easy-to-give powder which can be sprinkled on to your dog's normal meals! You can also utilise Calm-K9 Senior Boost for fun time and get creative with how you feed it. Why not try adding it to your dog's favourite yoghurt and smearing it on to a K9 Calm Mat as an enrichment activity, or mixing it into a filling for a Kong?

With its blend of superfood ingredients and its easy-to-feed formula, Calm-K9 Senior Boost is the support your senior dog needs to prolong their vitality and keep the signs of age at bay!

Ingredients to turn back the clock!

Add these ingredients to your Senior Dog's diet to turn back the clock!

Calm K9 Senior Boost has Vitamin C for brain health; L Carnitine to improve eye or vision health; Phosphatidyl Choline which helps promote new brain cell growth and neural connections (super for Senior Dogs!); Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, and Vitamin B9 to support brain and gut health; and Lemon Balm!

Lemon Balm is a powerful Superfood and a key ingredient in Calm-K9 Senior Boost. Let's look at the reasons why, below!

LEMON BALM

Lemon balm is a perennial, lemon-scented herb native to southern Europe, Asia Minor, and North Africa. Research has shown that it has a calming effect on stress-related behaviour, which can reduce the impact of anxiety related to cognitive decline.

In the Pardo-Aldarve et al. study conducted in 2019, Lemon balm given to children prior to dental examination resulted in reduced behaviours associated with anxiety, compared to a placebo. (Pardo-Aldarve et al., 2009)

In animal models, reduced behavioural response in response to new and unfamiliar environments has been determined in mice. (Soulimani et al., 1991)

Interestingly, lemon balm has been shown to improve cognitive function and agitation associated with Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline in humans. (Akhondzadeh et al., 2003)

Its strong performance in studies relating to decreasing anxiety makes lemon balm a compelling addition to the diet of with senior dogs with cognitive decline and associated anxiety.

CHANGES YOU CAN

Expect as your dog ages

Senior dogs... they've lived an amazing life with us. They have given us memories we will hold dear to us long after they are gone. For some, they will be the dogs that define all other dogs that we own after them... For others, they are the dogs that challenged us and taught us things we didn't even know we wanted to learn. Our senior dogs are our greying companions that carried us through life, dogs who witnessed the many events that we underwent: the celebrations and successes, the failures and the heartbreak.

Our Senior dogs have carried us through our most trying times and it can only be fair, and kind, to familiarise ourselves with their ageing process so that we can support them in their old age and provide them with special, unique care to ease them into this part of their life.

Watching our beloved canine companion as they grow old can be difficult, and yet there really is important knowledge that we can possess that will allow us to feel more confident in the decisions we make about their care. As a dog ages, their body goes through changes, their brain goes through changes, and understanding those changes and knowing how best to support those changes is essential.



Did you **KNOW?**

Whilst there are variations depending on breed, size and genetic makeup, a dog is typically considered a senior around 7-8 years old.

8 Signs of ageing



Change in Responses

Your dog may start to lose the level of response that you've come to expect. For example, their reflexes to auditory stimulus may be slower than they've been before.



Loss of Joy

It isn't abnormal for our senior dogs to demonstrate less joy. For us, their prior youthful exuberance and enthusiasm was an indicator of happiness. It is not uncommon that a senior dog is less joyful in their observable behaviour as they age.



Increased Vocalising

Whether it's from neurological changes, or other changes taking place, your dog may experience an increase in vocalising as a result of getting older. Making sure that your senior dog has plenty of mental and physical enrichment and activities in their lives will be key in addressing an increase in vocalisation.



Separation Struggles

Another symptom of your dog's aging process is increased separation struggles, even if your dog did not have separation anxiety related behaviours when they were younger.



Disorientation

A senior dog may also appear to be disoriented more often. This is due to cognitive decline as neurone pathways begin to degenerate with age. Providing senior dogs with proper nutrition and supportive supplements like Flexi-K9 and Calm K9 - Senior Boost (as well as maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle) can have a real impact on maintaining cognitive function.



Loss of Learning

Behaviours your dog may have known very well throughout their life may suddenly not exist. Your dog may be slower to respond, or less coordinated in their response. These are all symptoms of aging. Be patient with your senior dog and support them by taking things slowly.



Change in Sleep-Wake Cycles

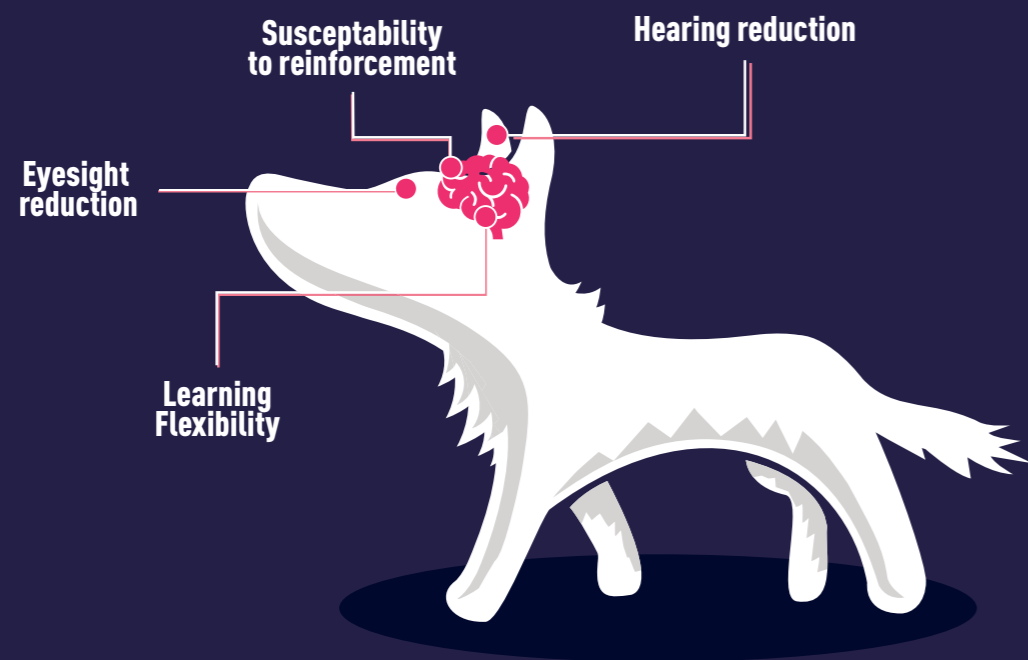
Incontinence is not abnormal for a senior dog. This can be a symptom to be aware of. You may need to provide more opportunities for toilet breaks and, in some cases, (depending on the advice of your veterinarian) doggy diapers can also be provided.



Change in Toileting

Incontinence is not abnormal for a senior dog. This can be a symptom to be aware of. You may need to provide more opportunities for toilet breaks and, in some cases, (depending on the advice of your veterinarian) doggy diapers can also be provided.

SUPPORT YOUR Senior dog through games!



What is tolerance of frustration?

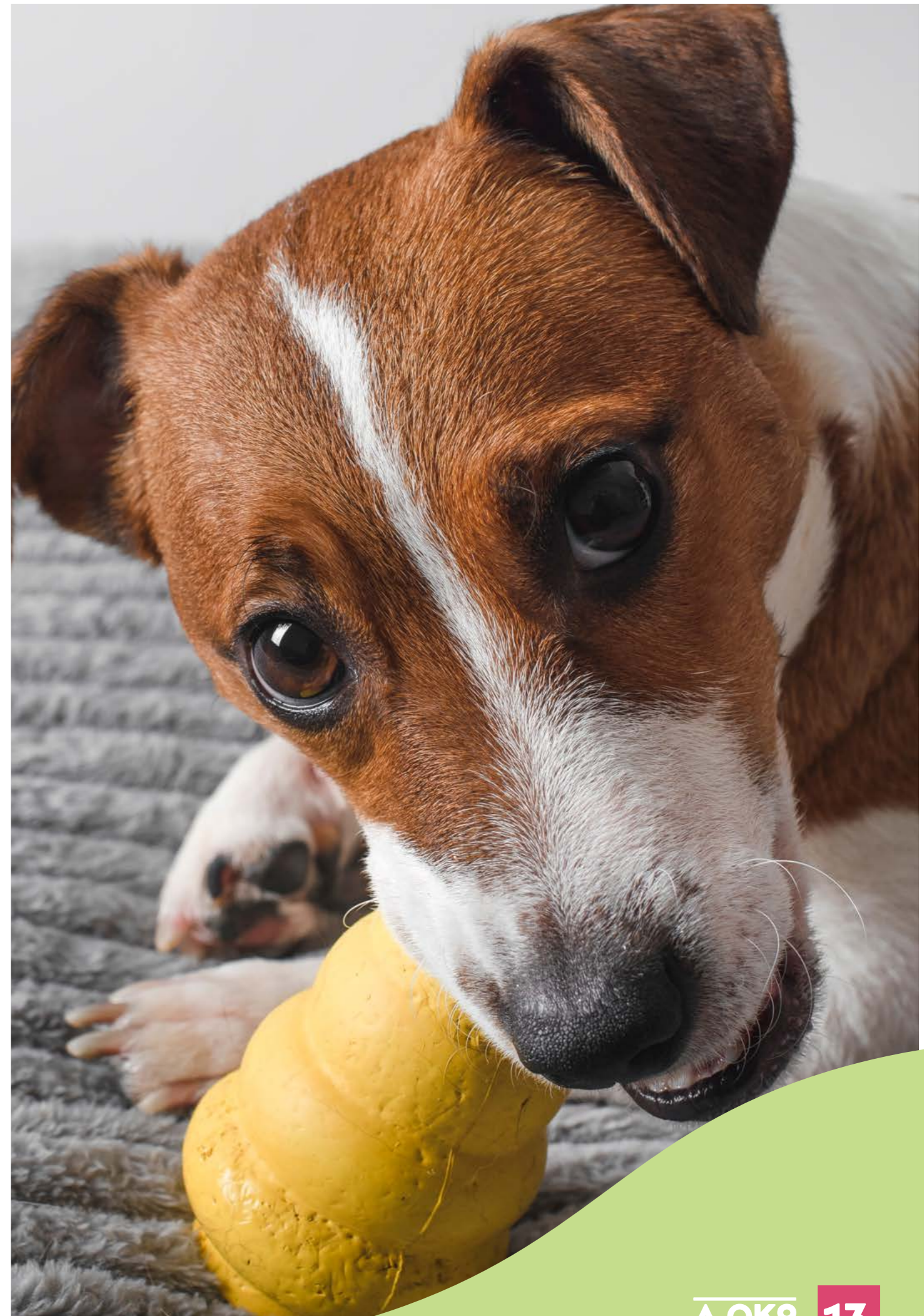
Your dog is naturally able to tolerate frustration about delayed gratification and delayed access, and will ordinarily be able to handle the frustration without over-arousal, or vocalising, etc.

However, your dog's ability to be patient may decrease as he/she starts to age, and tolerance to delay may be impacted.

The body is also changing and with that change comes discomfort, and an increase in aches and pains in the body and in the joints.

Therefore, as in humans (!) it isn't abnormal for some intolerance and some grumpiness to creep in in senior years.

One way in which you can help your senior dog is to play games that increase their tolerance of frustration.



HOW TO

Reduce tolerance of frustration?

DITCH THE ROUTINE – SENIOR VERSION

As human beings we are rather purposeful in what we do, when we move, and intentional when we decide an action needs to take place. We are easy to read, our patterns become muscle memory, so much so that we don't even recognise that we fall into them. Patterns could be as simple as flipping the light switch just prior to letting the dogs out in a fenced garden area, or turning the television off just prior to sitting up in your chair and standing up to grab the leash to take your dog for a walk... because after all, our world revolves around our dogs, right?

Our dogs very quickly recognise which movements we make are relevant to them and which movements are not important. This is essentially the game of Ditch the Routine. What can you do to make your actions purposeless to your dog? What can you do to make sure that routine isn't predictable, because when it comes to all dogs, including our senior dogs, predictability can actually lead to additional stress.

What this means is that you'll make sure that their routine isn't so predictable... The food doesn't always have to happen at the same time, nor does nap time, etc. Change it up to add some variety to their life. It will keep them from getting stressed about things NOT going as planned...

WHY DIDN'T WHAT I THOUGHT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, HAPPEN?

What do I do now?

Because life happens and routines that get established can change, and without setting our dogs up for success and preparing them to be flexible for those moments, we can sometimes inadvertently, without realising that it is happening, cause stress to our dogs by allowing predictability to run our choices and their lives.

Ditch the Routine helps support the flexibility that your senior dog needs to navigate the aging process. Being more flexible will be key as life changes around them and the reality is, it does change, and we need to be just as flexible in what we do for them.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS WE CAN DITCH OUR SENIOR DOG'S ROUTINE?

When they have their walks and if they have their walks on a schedule

The path we take on those walks and the location of where we go on our wonderful adventures together

What we provide them for their daily rations and diversifying the choices your senior dog is provided – **eating doesn't have to be boring!**

Sleeping and waking doesn't always have to happen at the same time or in the same place ... all while making sure they have quality sleep, when they sleep.

ENCOURAGE FLEXIBILITY

This is where Ditch the Routine comes into play, and yet also you can play games that will encourage your senior dog to problem solve and to be okay with adapting and adjusting away from what they may have expected.

Some fun games include:

- Working on them walking around a cone and coming back...
- Can they then hop on a bed just a few feet away?

These small games are great for their mental stimulation, and also awesome for keeping their brain active and engaged.

NOVELTY IS EVERYWHERE

Due to their eyesight starting to deteriorate, novelty (new things or old things that appear to be new) can appear to be everywhere. After all, blurry objects that can't be identified can be quite scary! As a result, senior dogs may be more pessimistic, and less willing to accept these "new" intrusions into their life.

Patience is key when navigating these changes with your senior dog. They have no idea what's happening, but as an owner it is good to know that these changes may happen and that they are a normal part of the aging process so that it isn't quite as startling when it takes place. Of course, when any changes occur, we highly recommend having consistent communication with your veterinarian to best support your senior dog through these changes.

Then, grow their optimism...

Try playing games that will help grow your dog's optimism and confidence when novelty appears: recreate the socialisation period with your senior dog, much like you would a young puppy navigating a novel and curious world. We've listed a few handy games below that you can play with your Senior dog!



GAME 1

DISTRACTION MARK TREAT (DMT)

Distraction Mark Treat teaches dogs to acknowledge change happening in the world around them calmly. It encourages them to see the distraction, to acknowledge awareness of the distraction, and then to disengage from the distraction. It's incredible! D.M.T grows resilience, optimism, reduces anxiety, and encourages a calm emotional response, all of which are key concepts for your aging dog.

GAME 2

POWER UP MARKERS



Power up your reward markers. It's time to boost those markers that may have been strong up until now but are losing either their value or initial impact. Powering up your markers can be key, not only to growing your senior dog's optimism, but also in helping to strengthen the reward experience.

A marker tells your dog they've done something you like and that you are going to reward them. Power Up your Marker by using a reinforcing cue word like "Yes!", and then offering a reward, when your dog gives you the behaviour you are looking for. Repeat 10 times and then again in another session to truly power it up so that your dog knows "Yes!" means they did a good job and food is coming to them.

[Want more DMT? Click here...](#)

GAME 3

NOVELTY SURPRISE PARTY

Use household items to create a physically appropriate obstacle course for your senior dog to navigate. Line up the objects in whichever way you would like, and spread kibble or treats throughout (like a treasure hunt!) Make sure it's safe and free from anything with height... In this game, you are not only providing them with a great way to keep their brain active with a low impact exercise, you are also ditching the routine!



GAME 4

BALANCE PATH

This is very similar to the Novelty Surprise Party, except rather than items being strung out a bit, with a Balance Path, you are creating a path of fun items for your dog to step on, go under, over, or around. Remember to keep your senior dog's physical capabilities in mind and know that they need rest after doing something like this.



GAME 5

CARDBOARD CHAOS

Much like it sounds like... take any box you can find and create a fun heap. If your senior dog is worried, make it easier by only have 1 or 2 boxes that are shallow or flat available to walk over. You'll scatter food on it when setting up and then bring in your dog to have fun.



GAME 6

SCATTER FEEDING

An excellent way to Ditch the Routine, provide breakfast by scattering it in the grass instead! This promotes and encourages use of your senior dog's nose, is low impact, and will give them something fun to do for their food. Win! Win!

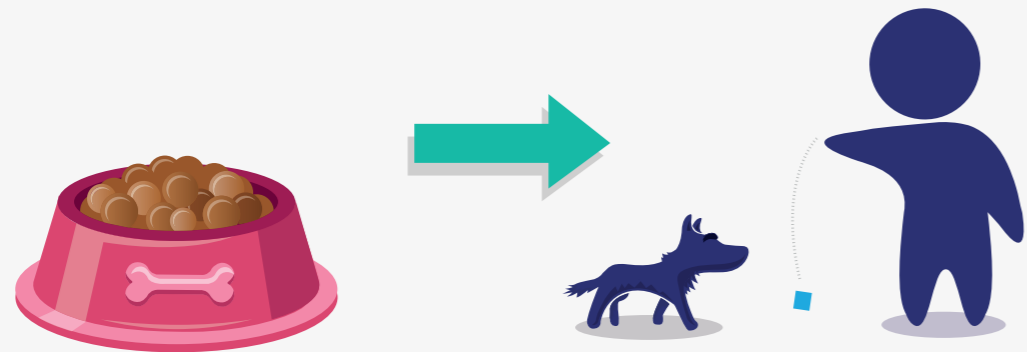
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After years of having a dog, you know him. You know the meaning of his snuffs and grunts and barks. Every twitch of the ears is a question or statement, every wag of the tail is an exclamation.

Robert R. McCammon, Boy's Life

”

Susceptibility in Reinforcement



Your dog's susceptibility to reinforcement (desire for food and how they can get it) may become impaired as they age. This is why it is vital to revisit or revitalise the concept of Ditch the Bowl for your senior dog. You want to diversify the experience and make sure you are catering it to their physical and mental capabilities, that you are enhancing the feeding experience by tailoring it to your dog's unique needs and requirements. A decreased sensation in their mouth may affect the reward experience so this is a time to experiment to see what works best for your dog. Things that worked before may not work throughout the aging process. This is an adventure for your dog and almost as if you've brought a new dog home. Now, instead of supporting your dog through their prime adult years, you are now supporting their senior version...

And while we love dogs of all ages, seniors truly do have a special place in our heart.

CREATING A NEW Reward experience for your Senior dog

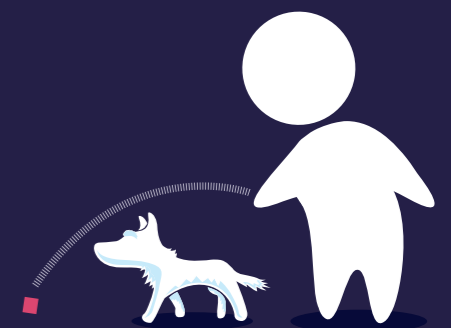
Get Ditch the Bowl eBook

TUNNELS...

1. Tunnels in your senior dog are neural pathways that degenerate as your dog ages. This is important to keep in mind when providing a reward experience for them.
2. Knowledge of this is essential to understanding cognitive decline
3. B Vitamins are involved in maintaining neuronal health and slowing degradation as well as supporting neurogenesis, the creation of new neurones.
4. Providing them with support to slow the progression is super key! There's a scoop for that! We dive into a supplement that can help support your senior dog's natural aging process further down!
5. **Calm-K9 - Senior Boost can be a gamechanger!**

DITCH THE BOWL

1. When your senior dog needs more flexibility, Ditching the Bowl will most definitely get them there!
2. Provide them with plenty of passive calming activities and enhance their day with reinforcement every time they're calm or make a great decision! No matter how well-behaved a dog is throughout their life, it helps to top up the value of the most desired behaviours.

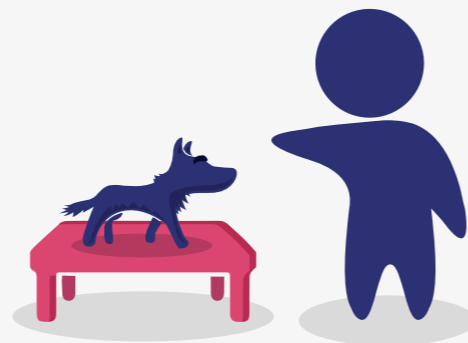


BUILD NEW REINFORCERS

1. Due to the fact that they may not be as able to accept reinforcement in the same way as they have before, including a decrease in sensation that affects receptiveness to certain reinforcement strategies, building new reinforcers into their life will help with optimism, as well as flexibility, and tolerance of frustration.
2. Get creative! With a senior dog you may want to change your delivery (less jumping to catch, more direct hand to mouth, etc) to cater to their individual needs.
3. Try new things! It very well may mean experimenting with different proteins or different textures to get the right fit!

SUPERCHARGE EXISTING REINFORCERS

1. Make existing reinforcers more fun by making them more exciting and engaging for your senior dog.
2. Go back to foundations with training games that are easy.
3. Utilise behaviours your dog knows really well to supercharge the reinforcer value and also supercharge those behaviours! You've got this!



REWARD EXPERIENCE

1. With physical and mental changes occurring, be aware that you may need to adjust your reward experience. If your dog is struggling physically, being able to modify their reward experience to suit them will be key.
2. Keep their head low so they don't have to stretch their neck up to get the reward if a food or toy reward.
3. Keep their physical condition in mind when playing and while they do need consistent and appropriate exercise, don't push them too hard. It's easy to forget when they're delighted to do the extra 5 runs after the toy that they may be sore later.

THE IMPACT ON Senior dogs hearing

SENIOR DOGS' HEARING DETERIORATES AS THEY AGE...

But don't you worry, unless your senior dog truly does lose their ability to hear, they will more than likely still come running whilst you're fighting with that plastic wrapper!

With a reduction in hearing abilities, you may notice that your older dog also becomes noticeably less responsive to the world around them or that they may startle when approached if they don't see you coming, nor hear you coming. This could also increase pessimism.

You may notice a decrease in their ability to take in new information as a result of all of the changes taking place in their body and mind. Their flexibility may also be impacted, as a result, and their willingness to respond to change may be affected.

Doesn't this sound like humans? There are parallels and it's easier to relate to when you can imagine the human version of what your dog is going through. Getting older means your dog is wiser and has enjoyed an amazing life experience and it also means that change is happening, that your dog's body and mind are becoming older, as well, and knowing what happens in the body, and in the mind, can help you to be your senior dog's best caregiver.

“ I may not always hear when you call my name and sometimes I miss the ball on the easy toss... but the love for you that shines in my eyes will never, ever, ever grow old. ”
Unknown



MANAGING

Discomfort and fitness for your dog

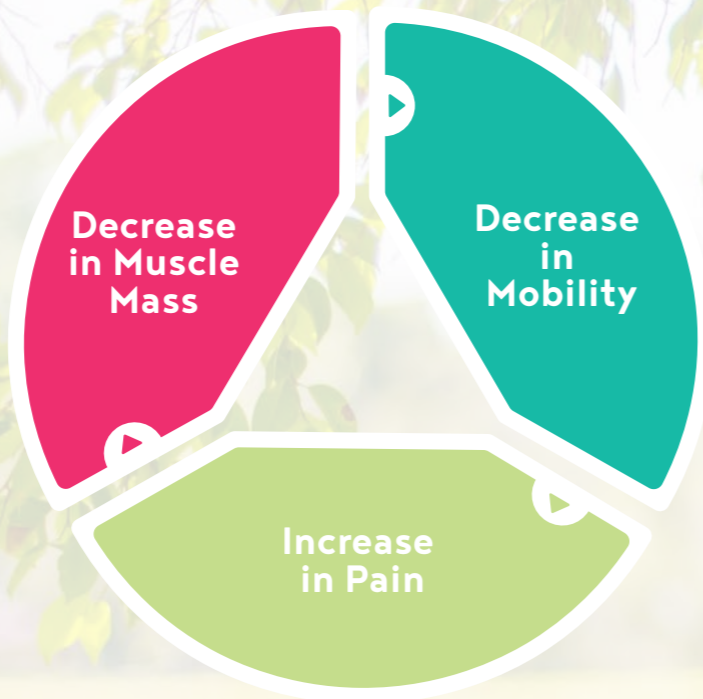
MANAGING PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT

Fortunately, as the world's medicine improves, both in humans and in dogs, we are given so many options to support the aging process in our dogs through holistic approaches that have proven to be successful, as well as other treatments that help to reduce the physical and mental progression of aging.

For example, in holistic approaches there are supplements that a senior dog can take to help their joints feel more supple, to improve their movement and alleviate arthritic discomfort... and to reduce pain in any way possible to help them live a happier, healthier life in their senior years.

A-OK9's Flexi-K9 is a mobility support supplement and an excellent way to support your senior dog's joints and overall body.

Get Flexi-K9 now!





As our dogs age, they become less flexible. Joints begin to stiffen as the amount of lubricating fluid decreases and cartilage becomes thinner, making activity levels decrease as movement becomes more difficult.

Flexi-K9 works by providing a concentrated level of superfoods that help to maintain excellent joint flexibility. Let's take a look at the ingredients...

Flexi-K9

Ingredients

TRANSFORMATIONAL TURMERIC & BLACK PEPPER

Science has shown that Turmeric that turmeric supports the natural anti-inflammatory processes within the joint and promotes joint wellness generally in all ages. Turmeric contains 5% Curcumin, which is the main active ingredient, best known for its powerful anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant effects!

GREEN LIPPED MUSSEL

Green lipped mussels are rich in Omega 3 Fatty Acids, minerals, essential amino acids and glycoproteins and contain natural Chondroitin, all of which support and promote joint wellness in all ages.

FISH OIL OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS

Fish oil powder has been shown to support dogs' hearts, joints, immune system and skin and coat! High in omega-3 fatty acid which are an essential type of fat that helps your dog's body and brain. Dogs can't produce omega-3 fatty acids on their own and must get them from their diet.

A form of managing their discomfort can also be a consistent, steady plane of exercise and making sure you include this into your dog's daily schedule.

Steady Plane of Exercise

Neuronal damage/degradation is something that happens within the brain and also within the body. Often, you'll see that your senior dog may have become clumsier in their body, that they have lower muscle mass, less neuronal stimulation of their muscle bellies, which in turn impacts pain...



The longest nerves in the body degenerate first – nerves in the hind limb that may cause a wobbly back end as well as other nerves that weaken, even one that may cause heavier panting. Often these symptoms are considered painful. When the nerves start to degenerate, they have a noticeable impact. With one specific nerve the larynx doesn't open as much as it should, and the senior dog's airway can be affected. These changes can look worrisome and painful, and yet they can be non-painful. Vitamin B can help to slow the progression of degeneration. That's important to know and finding a supplement with Vitamin B is essential for your senior dog. B Vitamins are involved in maintaining neuronal health and slowing degradation as well as supporting neurogenesis, the creation of new neurones.

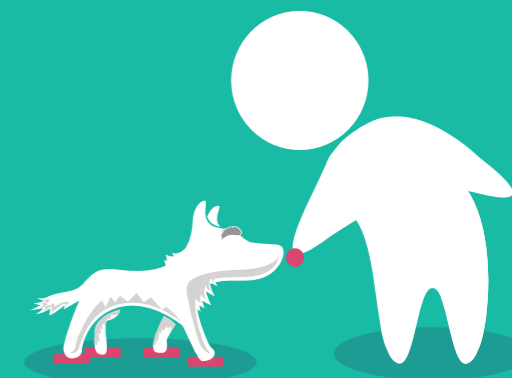
When working on fitness for your senior dog, an essential part of their overall wellness, make sure that the exercises are low impact exercises that are appropriate for your dog.

Warming up and cooling down your senior will also be very important. Do not rush into exercise. Even starting with a nice full-body massage where your focus is moving the skin over the body and activating muscles through focused massage can be incredibly beneficial.

Examples of appropriate exercises for Senior dogs

Square Stand Duration

A square stand where the focus is your dog's feet placement and their ability to maintain the position sounds like a simple exercise but can be very hard on the body for long lengths of time. Keep sessions short and sweet. (In fact, try standing without shifting your body weight from side to side... how long can you do it?)



Two Feet Up Stand with Duration

A two feet up Stand with duration focuses on different muscle groups than the Square Stand with Duration. Making sure you are tackling different muscle groups will be key to maintaining your senior dog's fitness. Reward generously and keep motions slow, including the release off of the object you're using. It doesn't have to be a high object and lure off for release so that your dog doesn't twist and turn quickly off of the platform.



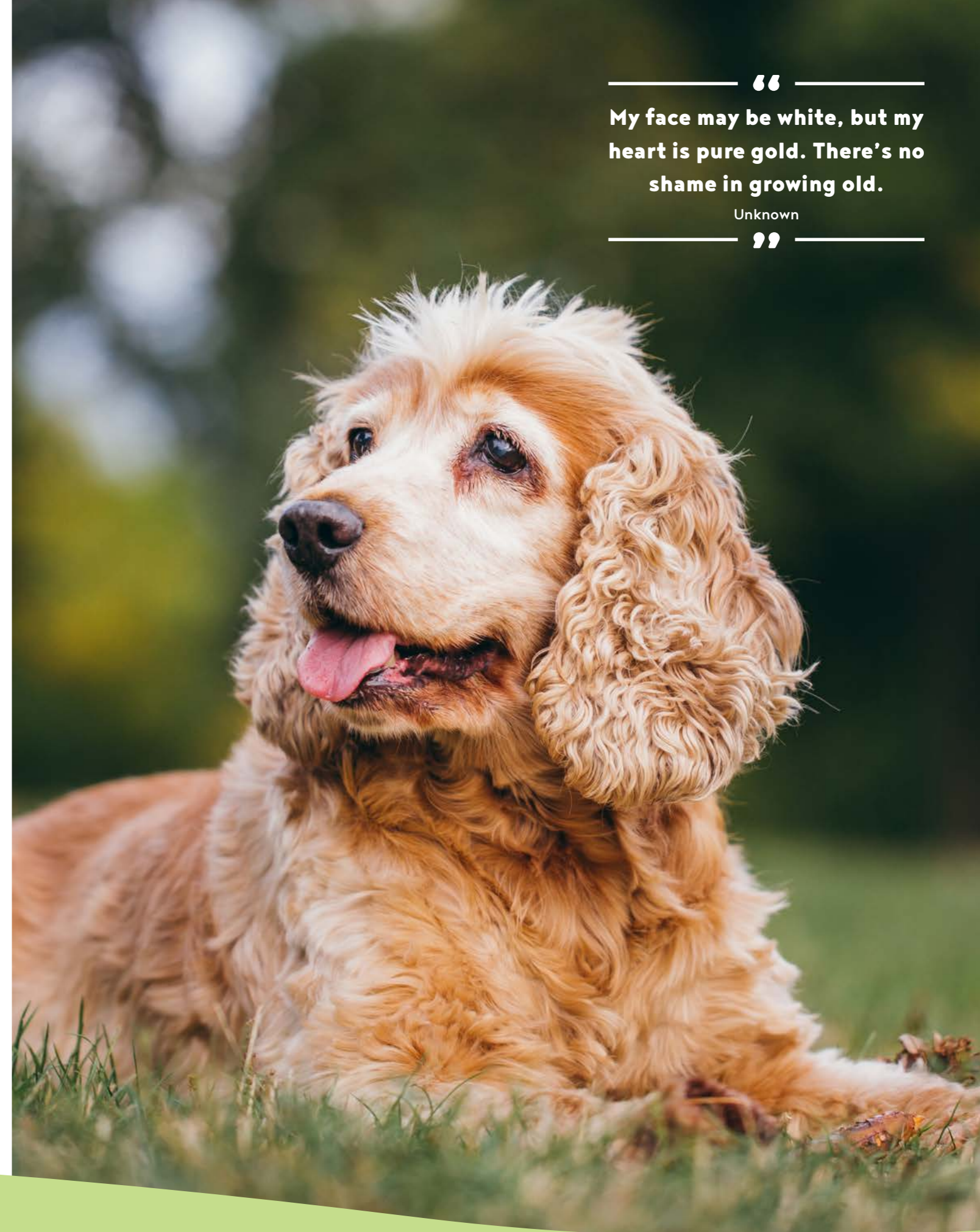
Cavalettis

Poles should be spaced such that each paw lands once in each space, starting with low height to increasing height to the level of the hock. With cavaletti fitness it can help to measure to your dog's shoulder from the ground and start there with the width between the poles on the ground, increasing or decreasing if you determine it's needed to get that smooth movement over the poles.



Paint the Town Red

Poles should be spaced such that each paw lands once in each space, starting with low height to increasing height to the level of the hock. With cavaletti fitness it can help to measure to your dog's shoulder from the ground and start there with the width between the poles on the ground, increasing or decreasing if you determine it's needed to get that smooth movement over the poles.



“
My face may be white, but my
heart is pure gold. There's no
shame in growing old.

Unknown

”

A-OK9

Be your Senior Dog's HEALTH HERO!



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