

# *Maine* **DOG** *Magazine*

**SUMMER 2017**  
DOG OWNER'S GUIDE



Bell's  
Furry Friends  
photography

**MAINE'S GUIDE TO ALL THINGS DOG!**

**EVENTS / HIKING / BEACHES / MORE**

# AGING DOGS: KEEPING THEM HAPPY AND HEALTHY

By Joyce Belcher

**C**OGNITIVE DECLINE, JOINT DEGENERATION, DIGESTIVE ISSUES, Immune system instability, Liver & Kidney issues are some of the most common worries that we all have with our aging dogs (and ourselves for that matter). While all the above are part of the aging process, there are many options for helping them be the best that they can be throughout their senior years and ultimately make us happier for giving them the extra support they deserve.

Prevention through knowledge by seeing your vet for yearly blood work can help us to understand any underlying changes that we may not know are there can be an invaluable tool. Should there be a health issue, we may have a better chance of changing the outcome with various options than if we didn't know until it was too late for options.

Prevention via regular dental checkups with a veterinarian that has special interest in veterinary dentistry or is a specialist in veterinary dentistry is also critical, especially with our aging dogs. A bad tooth may not be visible to most of us and can cause severe discomfort, possibly infection to your dog if left undiagnosed/untreated.

## COGNITIVE SUPPORT

Ginkgo biloba has become a common herb for use in the prevention and treatment of age related brain function for humans and is also safe and quite effective for dogs. Ginkgo works by improving blood flow to the brain and acts as an antioxidant providing protection against oxidative cell damage from harmful free radicals, a win-win. Overall, Ginkgo can improve peripheral circulation offering anti-aging effects of improved circulation like increased energy, better concentration, improved hearing, better social behavior and decrease anxiety.

Bacopa monnieri in Ayurvedic medicine it is considered a complete natural remedy for the mind. It nourishes and supports coordination of the brain for both short and long-term function, nourishes the nervous system, respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

Omega 3 oil from sustainable wild caught fish and cooked wild oily fish such as sockeye salmon with skin. Be sure to know your oil producer if you're using Omega 3 oil. There can be many "other oils" added as filler or carrier oils and may simply be listed as "mixed tocopherols." To me that isn't good enough information, I need to have ingredients listed clearly and precisely, otherwise what does it mean? Could there be vegetable oils such as soy that could be a high inflammatory marker for my elder pet? Absolutely there could be, and in many brands there are hidden oils as such. The point of the Omega oil is for anti-inflammatory properties to help with joints and skin conditions as well as kidney and cognitive function. For this, there is no room for filler oils or guessing games, it must be labeled clearly and be clean to win my business.

## IMMUNE SYSTEM AND DIGESTION

One of the best ways you can keep your dogs' immune system healthy is by protecting the digestive tract. A good quality potent pre/probiotic replaces microbes that are lost from physical and mental stress, inadequate diets, etc., while keeping his digestive tract healthy. If you are feeding a whole (real) food diet, your aging dog may be getting most of the enzymes he needs for nutrient absorption but if you feed a commercial diet, overcooked food or unbalanced diet, he may not be getting the necessary enzymes for optimal digestion. If this is the case, there are many canine nutritionists that offer help with individual diets that can make this easy for you to achieve. Dr. Dee Blanco, holistic veterinarian, offers education and mini courses in balanced diets via webinars. I feel that she makes it easy for any dog owner to achieve great success with their dogs' diet, easily!

80% of the immune system is in the gut, this should be the first area of importance for all dogs no matter what their age and it is never too late to do the very best we can for them. While I'm an advocate for a well-balanced, good quality raw diet for dogs, older dogs may have greater digestibility with mostly cooked food and pre/probiotic from raw goats' milk to supplement.



## CANINE & FELINE WHOLE FOOD NUTRITION

For more info on Feeding Fresh Webinars:  
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### LIVER AND KIDNEY SUPPORT

Liver and kidney issues can cover a large spectrum of disarray in your dogs' overall health. Once again, I lean toward prevention. Keeping these filtering organs in peak condition can prevent a myriad of dis-ease in the body. Did you know that the liver has more than 500 vital functions? Sure, it's main job is to produce bile that helps remove waste and break down fats during digestion but it also detoxifies chemicals and metabolizes drugs. The kidneys filter and remove waste products of metabolism and rid unnecessary substances by excreting in urine while returning water and some salts back into the blood stream. They maintain the balance of body water to keep the body hydrated for optimal function to remain healthy.

The least amount of chemicals and/or synthetic materials you introduce to your dog, the better the kidney and liver function will be overall. When the filtering and elimination organs become overburdened by toxins, they will stop working efficiently creating havoc in many areas of the body. Removing toxins on a regular basis is key for vital health.

Schisandra berry is one of the most unique Adaptogens that is readily available to us because of its dual stardom affinity; the liver and the central nervous system. It can increase the production of enzymes in the liver and the digestive organs, including the bowel, all the while increasing the body's ability to metabolize and excrete toxins. I believe Schisandra is one of the most important herbs for aging dogs as the actions and properties can not only help to remove toxins from the liver but also the central nervous system. With the myriad of chemicals that are recommended to "prevent" ticks, fleas and heartworm hosting ingredients that are neuro-toxins, I believe that dogs of any age will benefit with the addition of Schisandra, whether part of a daily or occasional supplement along with other herbs to create synergy for cleansing, immune strength and overall vitality.

Nettle Leaf aka "stinging nettle" by its common name. Once dried or extracted, there is no sting left to the leaf and has a diminished chance of allergic reaction. In fact, fresh extractions of nettle leaf are used to combat seasonal allergies by treating imbalances of the mucous membranes. Nettle is a blood purifier, can be a diuretic where there is excess fluid,

increases kidney and liver function, is a digestive. High in calcium, chromium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, silicon, thiamine, Vitamin A.

Nettle is a catalyst for absorption of many vitamins, minerals and trace minerals as well as several other herbs.

## MUSCULOSKELETAL-JOINTS, CONNECTIVE TISSUE

Regular exercise is still crucial -being mindful of their physical condition so not to overdo the walk and consider the cooler time of day in hot weather for his outings. Consistency with daily walks is important also for a couple of reasons; you will have the most success maintaining muscle and suppleness in the ligaments, tendons and joints while giving your pup the thought process of looking forward to this special time with you whether it's 2 or 4 x daily. And we all know how much joy they get from a simple jaunt on the beach, trail or wherever your favorite place to go together may be, fresh air and socialization plays an important role no matter what the age.

Whole foods that nourish and build the body first, supplementation second. Food can build or deplete a body, fresh, whole food, that is balanced for the canine body will nourish this entire structure. Inflammatory foods that are mostly undigested or lacking in protein will deplete the musculoskeletal system. Inflammation is heat, heat dries and breaks down cartilage, connective tissue, ligament and tendon making it weak over time. Vitamin C is not readily found in the average canine diet but is hugely important to support all the above. Synthetic Vitamin C however, can cause GI distress as well as kidney distress as they must work overtime to process and remove it.

When extra support is needed whether for preventative or to help with some repair, there are many options.

Amalaki is one of the highest absorbable sources of Vitamin C that does not create GI distress in dogs when used at appropriate doses and blended with complementary ingredients. Its affinity is to the entire musculoskeletal system, strengthening connective tissue, ligament, tendon and bone. Amalaki also supports immune function and cellular regeneration with strong antioxidant properties that help protect cells against oxidative damage. The bioflavonoids rutin and quercetin also contribute to overall antioxidant effect while working against inflammation. Amalaki is known as the "Great Rejuvenator."

A high-quality Glucosamine HCl can be very effective with helping to re-build (or prevent) cartilage in the joints.

*Joyce Belcher is a certified herbalist-formulator specializing in organic supplements and medicinals for animals. She resides in York, ME, and is the founder of Herbs for Life, Inc., manufacturer of the Pet Wellness Blends™ and Veterinary Botanicals™ product lines. Ms. Belcher has spent years advancing her herbal studies mentoring with several highly-respected experts in the field of veterinary herbalism. Her areas of expertise include immune balance, the prevention and treatment of Lyme disease in dogs and horses, and custom medicinals in veterinary herbalism. In her practice, Joyce Belcher formulates herbal medicine and supplements for holistic and integrative veterinarians and educates animal owners to be proactive in caring for the health of their animals. She helps owners make informed decisions by speaking to groups through equine and canine symposia and working dog foundations and is a columnist for Dog's Naturally Magazine. She also teaches western herbs for animals to herbal apprentices at herbal schools in New England. You can call 207-451-7093 or go online: [www.petwellnessblends.com](http://www.petwellnessblends.com)*



In addition to the above, there are many wonderful anti-inflammatory herbs such as Turmeric Root, Ashwagandha, Boswellia and Devil's Claw that work wonders for our elder pets. I always recommend purchasing only Certified Organic and know your source.

Should you want to consider treats that claim they can support or help with degenerative canine joint disease or inflammation in general, my advice is to carefully read the labels as many of these products have filler and binder ingredients that can be more than inert. Some have digestibility issues as well as toxins and a high caloric value due to the daily quantity needed to achieve the right dose of the active supplement.

Acupuncture, hydro-therapy and chiropractic modalities can make a world of difference to keep our elder pets comfortable for inflammatory conditions as well as stagnation and aging in general.

A younger dog can make a difference to an aging dog that is on their own and the elder can be a great help with training the new pup. Food for thought.

### Side Note:

Bacopa and Shisandra Berry combination is known as "scholars soup." Bacopa has an affinity for memory retention while Schisandra is known to increase cerebral energy, creating synergy for optimal learning.