



White Whiskers

AGING PET CARE

Mobility · Pain · Hospice

Senior Dog Mobility

Dogs' bodies all largely age in the same way. When they begin to transition through their middle years into their senior years, they develop discomfort in the back, the hips and knees just like we do. Unlike us, however, our dogs have 4-wheel drive and because they have more to work with in their front limbs, they begin the process of slowly transitioning weight from the hind area which is less comfortable, to the front area which is more comfortable. Don't worry, you didn't miss that change. It's a slow process that's done incrementally and is largely invisible to those of us who are with them everyday.

However, over the years of working that front end more and that back end less, they build muscle in their forelimbs while they lose muscle throughout their back and hindlimbs. This results in a body shape that Dr. Kelly and Dr. Robert refer to as "body builder front, ballerina butt." These changes progress more quickly the more weight that each dog carries so our larger breeds see this transition faster than our smaller breeds. Given enough time, however, we see this transition in dogs of all shapes and sizes. Medically, we refer to this age-related loss of muscle mass as sarcopenia.

While old age isn't a disease, age related fragility does open the door for additional challenges. Anytime we suffer additional soft tissue or orthopedic injury, metabolic disease, cancer or any other physical extraction on their bodies, those challenges often act like hitting the fast forward button on the sarcopenia process and we can see an acceleration of its effects.

Unfortunately, we cannot stop the procession of time and eventually we will have to map what and where our quality-of-life boundaries lay. The good news is, we have tools in our toolbox that can help slow and mitigate that natural progression. Those tools include, but are not limited to, adjustments in pain medicine, therapeutic massage and exercise, home modification and, of course, regular maintenance visits with our veterinarians. The proper implementation of these tools means elevating the everyday lives of our senior dogs and celebrating not just the dog they were, but the dog they are.

We look forward to helping you figure out what your dog's best tools are!

Welcome to the White Whiskers Family!

