



SAN TAN CANINE TRAINING NEWSLETTER

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SENIOR DOGS

Seven signs that could mean trouble in your dog's health

Changes that warrant investigation include:

1. **Limping or lameness** – The most common cause of lameness is arthritis, also called DJD or degenerative joint disease. Besides limping, dogs with DJD may be stiff or reluctant to exercise, and have trouble rising or handling stairs. Treatment includes anti-inflammatory pain medication, joint and nutritional supplements, exercise therapy, and, most important, weight control. Excess weight interferes with joint motion and stresses joints. Other causes of lameness include injury, various diseases, and cancer.
2. **Change in appetite or weight** – An increased or decreased appetite, or unexplained weight gain or weight loss can be linked to many different conditions. These include internal organ disease (kidney, liver, or heart), diabetes, oral problems (periodontitis, abscessed teeth, mouth tumors), hormonal imbalances, abdominal tumors, and parasitic disease. An accurate diagnosis is critical for effective treatment.
3. **Abnormal chewing** – Dropping food from the mouth, difficulty chewing, chewing on one side, face rubbing, or bad breath suggest a dental disorder, sinus disease, or mouth tumor. Sometimes lack of appetite, weight loss, sneezing or nasal discharge accompanies these signs. Teeth cleaning, removal of diseased teeth, and antibiotic therapy may be necessary to restore your dog's oral health. Treatment options for tumors include surgical removal, and radiation or chemotherapy.
5. **Increased water consumption** – Drinking more water, usually accompanied by more frequent urination, can be associated with kidney or liver disease, diabetes, or other endocrine disorders. Management depends upon the underlying cause.
6. **Changes in urination** – Increased urination, straining during urination, dribbling urine, blood in the urine, or repeated or unexplained accidents in a house-trained dog often indicate a problem of the urinary tract. Problems can vary from infection to urinary stones to a tumor. Depending on the cause, your veterinarian may suggest drug therapy, or special diet, or surgery.
7. **Behavioral changes** – Circling, aimless wandering, increased sleeping, forgetting houstraining, or seizures can be signs of canine cognitive dysfunction (akin to senility in people), brain tumors, or various neurological disorders. Medications may help cognitive dysfunction, while neuralgic conditions are treated medically or surgically. The combination of radiation therapy is useful in managing dogs with brain tumors, and long-term control or even cures are possible.
8. **Lumps and bumps** – Small, benign fatty tumors are common in older dogs. After being diagnosed, they are often left in place unless they become larger, interfere with movement, or there is a change in appearance and firmness. Surgical excision is the cornerstone of treatment for most skin tumors, but radiation therapy or chemotherapy may be advised.

SEEK TREATMENT

If you notice any of the signs discussed above, don't wait until your next scheduled appointment to take your dog to your veterinarian. The sooner your vet can evaluate your dog, the more likely he will be able to recover fully.

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