

Understanding Canine Cognitive Dysfunction

Recognising the signs of dementia in older dogs

Many senior dogs continue to enjoy a wonderful quality of life well into their teenage years. However, some older dogs develop changes in memory, learning and behaviour that may be associated with Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (CCD) – sometimes referred to as canine dementia.

Early recognition allows your veterinary team to investigate possible medical causes and put a plan in place to help your dog remain comfortable for as long as possible.



COULD IT BE CANINE COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION?

Remember **DISHAA**

D

Disorientation



Appears lost in familiar places, gets stuck behind furniture, stares into space or seems unsure where they are.

I

Interaction changes



Seeking more reassurance than usual, becoming withdrawn, greeting family differently or changes in social behaviour.

S

Sleep-wake changes



Restless overnight, pacing, vocalising during the night or sleeping much more during the day.

H

House soiling



Toileting indoors despite previously being house trained or forgetting established routines.

A

Activity changes



Less interest in play or walks, aimless pacing, repetitive behaviours or appearing unsure what to do.

A

Anxiety



New fears, increased clinginess, difficulty settling or becoming distressed more easily.

i Not every behavioural change is dementia.

Many medical conditions can produce signs that look very similar to Canine Cognitive Dysfunction. These include arthritis and chronic pain, reduced vision or hearing, hormonal disorders, urinary disease, neurological disease and other illnesses associated with ageing. Your veterinary surgeon will investigate these possibilities first because treating them can significantly improve your dog's quality of life, even when cognitive decline is also present.



HELPING YOUR SENIOR DOG



Keep daily routines predictable and calm.



Continue gentle walks appropriate for your dog's mobility.



Encourage sniffing and exploration rather than focusing on distance.



Use simple food puzzles and enrichment activities your dog can still enjoy successfully.



Ensure food, water and favourite resting places are easy to access.



Provide good lighting in the evening if sight is declining.



Avoid moving furniture unnecessarily.



Reward calm behaviour & avoid punishment for behaviours caused by confusion.

COULD PAIN BE PLAYING A ROLE?

Many older dogs with pain or arthritis become:

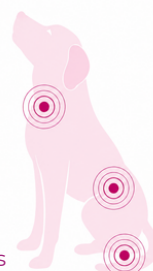
- ✓ restless
- ✓ anxious
- ✓ reluctant to settle
- ✓ less interactive
- ✓ awake during the night

These signs are sometimes mistaken for dementia. If you think your dog may be uncomfortable, speak to your veterinary surgeon.

Excellent advice is also available at www.caninearthritis.co.uk



canine arthritis management



WHY EARLY RECOGNITION MATTERS



Behaviour changes are not "just old age".



Many medical conditions can be treated.



Earlier support often means a better quality of life.



Your veterinary team can help identify the cause and discuss an appropriate management plan.

If you notice changes in your older dog, book a veterinary appointment.



NEED MORE HELP?

Behaviour concerns are often easier to address when support is sought early. Did you know most pet insurance companies cover the costs of clinical behaviourists?



Dr Michelle Lord

Clinical Animal Behaviourist
PhD • CCAB • APBC



07944 577891



michelle@co-evolve.co.uk



www.co-evolve.co.uk



This resource has been produced by

Dr Michelle Lord

and

Co-Evolve

