



## Older Cats...

### Tips for Caring for Their Care!



Older cats, such as 13-year-old Knicky and 17-year-old Maya--above, bring special joys. Although often older cats are over-looked when people are looking to adopt, choosing an older cat can be a great choice. Many older cats are extremely friendly, gentle, loving and easily adapt to a new home and family. And in that instinctive way that cats have, seem to know how lucky they are to have a home and show their love and appreciation.

Caring for an older cat can be expensive. Our Winston Norek Fund offers veterinary assistance to senior citizens in need. Please consider mailing a donation today! Our mailing address is AnimaLovers, PO Box 6426, Albany NY 12206.

Hi {FIRST\_NAME|Friend of AnimaLovers},

Older cats, like older humans, require special care. Their bodies don't function as well as they did when they were younger. Cats that were always healthy may suddenly develop health issues, later in their lives. According to information currently available on a website produced by Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, the percent of cats over six years of age has nearly doubled in the last decade<sup>[1]</sup> And, we have no reason to believe that the percentage won't continue to increase during the next decade! With cats living longer lives than they did in the past, more cat owners will need to have more information about caring for their older cats.

### Tips from AnimaLovers's Volunteers

Here are some tips from some of our AnimaLovers's volunteers with older cats.

**Please note:** The following advice is offered as non-medical information, only. Please be sure to contact your veterinarian for medical advice relating to your pet!

**Jan Shannon, cat program coordinator and board member**

As cats get older you might want to consider some special accommodations as you would with older people. They share some of the same difficulties as humans - less energy, arthritis, reduced appetite. You might set up litter boxes and feeding

It's particularly important to have annual check-ups for your older cat. Again, as with people, identifying a problem early on gives you the opportunity to address it before it becomes serious. Keeping your cat indoors, paying attention to its behavior and habits, along with regular vet check-ups can help ensure that you and your kitty can share lots of wonderful years together.

**Sally Daggett, webmaster and board member**



I have a 17-year-old cat, Maya, that has always been extremely healthy. A couple of months ago, I noticed that she seemed

to be eating less than usual. The first couple of days, I thought she was probably just continuing to show signs of aging; but, her behavior stayed on my mind. I decided to have the vet give her a quick check-up. It's a good thing I did—she had become dehydrated and had lost several pounds (she's a tiny cat, anyway!). I couldn't believe how quickly this happened, and I was reminded that babies and the elderly need to have medical attention very quickly since they are so fragile. If you see marked changes in your elderly cat's eating or eliminating behavior, don't wait to take her to the vet.

**Judy Robertson, president of AnimaLovers**

Cats try to hide illness. It's an inborn self-protective instinct. If your cat becomes listless,

areas on both levels if you have a two-story house. You can check with your veterinarian about drugs to help with arthritis and sore muscles, and you will want to begin to monitor eating habits. Older cats can develop hyperthyroidism and lose a great deal of weight in a short time - but this can often be easily addressed with regular and inexpensive medication.

Older animals also still need mental and physical stimulation. Often adding a younger feline to your family will bring joy to your cat (think grandparents enjoying watching their grandchildren at play - even if they can't always participate) and some light play is still a good thing. Although they might not want to chase a laser pen at lightning speed, moving around - batting a ball, etc. keeps muscles from tightening.

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[1] *The special needs of the senior cat* . (2006). Brochure, College of Veterinary Medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/brochures/seniorcat.html>

crys, wanders aimlessly, or has accidents, please take him/her in for a checkup. And do it quickly ! Some illnesses, such as urinary tract infections, can be fatal just a short time after they start.

### Additional References

The following sites contain additional tips for caring for elderly cats.

- "The Special Needs of the Senior Cat" <http://www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc/brochures/seniorcat.html>
- "Caring for Senior Cats" <http://www.medi-vet.com/seniorcat.aspx>
- "Senior Pet Care" [http://www.healthypet.com/PetCare/PetCareArticle.aspx?art\\_key=1973ee87-a0d7-4f77-a930-1824ffc8eda](http://www.healthypet.com/PetCare/PetCareArticle.aspx?art_key=1973ee87-a0d7-4f77-a930-1824ffc8eda)

### Other Special Cats

Elderly cats are special; but, there are many other cats that are also special! Currently, AnimaLovers has several "special" cats that need to find their permanent homes. Please check our listings on our website if you know of someone who is looking to adopt a cat and would be interested in becoming a "special" adopter! <http://www.animalovers.org/SpecialKitties.html>

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