



436 Empire Bay Drive
Empire Bay NSW 2257
Ph: 02 4363 2222
Web: www.beachandbayvet.com.au
Email: info@beachandbayvet.com.au

Supporting your senior cat

The Beach and Bay team are passionate about helping our animal patients to live their best lives, throughout *all* stages of life. Here's how we can help your cat live as comfortably and happily as possible, regardless of their age.

What are some of the most common older cat issues to keep an eye out for?

1. Arthritis

Arthritis affects 90% of cats over 10 years old. Unfortunately, it can be easily missed by owners in the earlier stages, as rather than obvious limping, pets often show more subtle symptoms such as:

- Temporary stiffness after rest
- A hesitance to jump up or down from heights
- Reduced daily activity
- Difficulty with posturing to go to the toilet
- Reduced self-grooming behaviours
- Reluctance to be touched or petted in certain areas (such as around the lower back)

We offer many options for supporting joint mobility and comfort in cats, including:

- Anti-inflammatory pain relief medications
- Long-acting pain relief injections
- Safe and effective joint health supplements
- Adjunctive pain relief medications

2. Dental disease

Dental disease will gradually develop in any cat without a good dental hygiene maintenance routine, but it is much more likely to be present in older pets. Additionally, middle-aged to older cats are more likely to develop FORLs, which are painful tooth

cavity lesions that cause progressive damage to affected teeth. Unhealthy teeth and gums allow bacteria to enter your pet's bloodstream, which can cause damage to organs and seriously reduce their quality and quantity of life.

Some owners may be reluctant to put their senior cat under general anaesthesia for dental procedures, due to concerns about the general anaesthetic. We'd like to reassure owners that the risk of anaesthesia in the majority of senior pets is still minimal and is far outweighed by the health and quality of life benefits of a comfortable, disease-free mouth.

As well as regular oral health assessments and dental procedures we can provide information and support around home care products for keeping your cat's mouth clean and fresh!

3. Organ changes

As cats age, they are more likely to develop issues such as chronic kidney disease, gut disease, or hormonal imbalances.

At home, it is important to monitor your pet's weight, energy levels, appetite, stools, and drinking/urination levels, and seek advice regarding any changes in these markers of health. We also recommend routine 6-monthly health checks for cats 8 years old and over. This is because our vets are often able to detect developing issues earlier with physical examination, blood pressure checks, and blood/urine tests.

If your cat is diagnosed with a chronic organ issue, our vets will be able to recommend supportive medications and/or prescription diets to help maintain their wellness for longer. This veterinary advice and support will ease the pressure on the organs that are struggling and help your pet to live their best life.

4. Behavioural and sleep changes

It is still reasonably common for behavioural or sleep changes in older cats to be written off as them "just getting older". Frequently noted symptoms include:

- Decreased activity during the day (more sleeping)
- Increased night-waking
- Incontinence or other changes in toileting habits

- Increased anxiety or “jumpiness”
- Being more withdrawn
- Excessive yowling or vocalising
- Unusual cranky behaviour

In older cats, these symptoms may be caused by either a deterioration in brain health (i.e. “dementia”) or other health issues affecting the pet’s brain or mental health, such as chronic pain associated with dental discomfort, or high blood pressure associated with kidney disease.

If your pet shows any behavioural changes such as those listed above, we recommend a prompt check-up so our veterinary team can determine the underlying cause. Based on our diagnosis, we can recommend effective treatment or management of your cat’s condition to help them feel and be their best self.

5. Changing nutritional needs

Many older cats benefit from a review of their regular diet, to ensure that their changing nutritional needs are being supported.

For some pets, this is as simple as switching to a prescription Senior diet formulated with clinically-proven antioxidants and essential fatty acids to support brain and organ health, combined with high-quality, digestible proteins at the optimal level for their life stage.

Depending on their particular condition, other elderly cats may benefit from “sensitive stomach” diets for easier digestibility, or prescription diets to support organ health and wellness (such as a prescription kidney support diet).

Keeping your cat in the best possible health will not only help to guarantee their best quality of life but will also help to keep your purr-fect family member by your side for cuddles and companionship for as long as possible.

For more questions on senior cat health, consult the Beach and Bay Vet team: contact the clinic on 4363 2222 or info@beachandbayvet.com.au