

## **Elderly dogs**

Old age comes to us all I'm afraid and the changes that it brings about can sometime be restrictive. Maintaining a level of fitness is sometimes difficult but can be eased with short but regular walks on softer ground. Canine hydrotherapy is also good in maintaining muscle tone, where the water provides buoyancy allowing supported exercise. Your vet will be able to provide you with details of your local canine hydrotherapy centre.

It is important to maintain a healthy weight for your pet as it increases in age. Weight problems are a major contributing factor to other health related problems in pets. Cardiovascular disease, joint strain and skeletal problems can all be attributed to being over weight. Special geriatric diets are available which maintains a pet's condition, coat and general health by providing and compensating with all the necessary vitamins and minerals required in the older animal. Two small meals are generally better for your older dog rather than one large meal.

Walks should be kept short, yet fulfilling enough for your dog. Create interest for them by visiting different places, particularly areas with lots of scents that will keep their interest and stimulated. Older pets tend to sleep more and a firm, supportive bed will help when their joints begin to feel the strains of aging. In a busy household, be sure to let your older dog get plenty of rest and a quiet, draft free area of the house should be chosen to site his bed.

If there are other younger animals in the house, allowing them time apart from one another to get sufficient rest is important to prevent irritability. Regular three monthly vet check ups should be made, to ensure they are kept healthy. As with any elderly species there is an increased incidence of ailments, therefore by being diligent with health check ups prevents any unnecessary problems developing.

