

Elderly Dogs – Supporting the Ageing Canine -Understanding Changes and How Therapy Can Help

Understanding the Ageing Process

As dogs grow older, their bodies naturally begin to slow down. **Muscles, joints, and connective tissues** lose some elasticity and strength and the body may not recover as quickly from exercise or injury.

Older dogs may also experience **reduced mobility, stiffness and changes in posture**, along with behavioural or cognitive changes. These are normal parts of ageing, but with the right support, senior dogs can remain **comfortable, active and happy** well into their later years.

Common Age-Related Changes

- Stiffness, reduced flexibility, or slower movement
- Muscle loss or weakness
- Arthritis or joint discomfort
- Difficulty rising, climbing stairs, or jumping
- Decreased stamina and activity levels
- Hearing or vision loss
- Cognitive changes (confusion, restlessness, altered sleep)
- Increased anxiety or sensitivity to touch
- Weight gain or loss

These changes often develop gradually, making regular observation and early intervention important.

How Ageing Affects the Body

Over time, the **musculoskeletal system** becomes less resilient. Joints may develop degenerative changes and **muscle tone may decrease**, placing extra strain on supporting tissues.

Reduced blood flow and slower healing can also contribute to **stiffness and discomfort**, particularly after periods of rest.

In some cases, **compensatory movement patterns** can develop, leading to soreness or imbalance elsewhere in the body.

How Therapy Helps

Osteopathy and massage therapy offers gentle, effective support for ageing dogs. These hands-on treatments help **maintain mobility, reduce discomfort and improve overall wellbeing**.

Therapeutic Benefits:

- **Eases stiffness and pain:** Helps reduce tension and joint discomfort associated with arthritis and reduced mobility.
- **Improves circulation:** Supports oxygen and nutrient delivery to muscles and tissues for better healing and comfort.
- **Maintains flexibility & movement:** Encourages natural, comfortable motion & prevents secondary strain.
- **Supports posture and balance:** Keeps the body aligned and helps prevent slips or overcompensation.
- **Enhances relaxation and rest:** Promotes calmness, reduces anxiety, and improves sleep quality.
- **Boosts overall wellbeing:** Encourages a positive emotional state & supports your bond

Therapy sessions for older dogs are always **gentle, slow, and adapted** to suit their comfort and tolerance levels.

Aftercare and Ongoing Support

- Provide **soft, supportive bedding** to protect joints and promote rest.
- Keep **exercise gentle and consistent**, focusing on mobility rather than speed or endurance.
- Use **rugs or mats** on slippery floors to prevent falls.
- Encourage **low-impact activities** like short walks, swimming, or scent games.
- Maintain a **healthy diet** and weight to reduce joint strain.
- Schedule **regular therapy sessions** to monitor and support ongoing comfort.
- Work alongside your **veterinarian** for any pain management or medication needs.
- Offer plenty of **affection and reassurance** — emotional wellbeing is just as important as physical care.

Therapy helps elderly dogs stay mobile, comfortable, and happy — supporting both physical and emotional wellbeing throughout their later years.