

Canine Dementia (Canine Cognitive Dysfunction)

Understanding the Condition and Supporting Quality of Life

What is Canine Cognitive Dysfunction?

Often called **canine dementia**, is a **neurodegenerative condition** similar to humans.

Primarily affects older dogs and results from **age-related changes in the brain** that impact memory, learning, awareness, and behaviour.

While CCD cannot be cured, early recognition & supportive care, including therapies & lifestyle changes - can **greatly improve quality of life** & help dogs stay comfortable & engaged.

Common Signs and Behavioural Changes

Owners may notice gradual changes in behaviour or habits.

- **Disorientation** – appearing lost in familiar places, getting stuck in corners, or pacing aimlessly.
- **Interactions** - changes in social behaviour; may seem withdrawn or anxious, or seek more reassurance.
- **Sleep-wake cycle** – increased restlessness at night, sleeping more during the day.
- **House training** – accidents indoors, forgetting previously learned toileting routines.
- **Activity level** – reduced interest in play, walks, or family interaction; repetitive movements.

Other signs may include vocalising for no reason, staring into space, or increased anxiety when separated.

How Therapy Helps (Osteopathy and Massage)

Can provide gentle, non-invasive support, by helping the body relax, improving circulation, and maintaining physical comfort.

Focus on reducing tension & enhancing overall health.

Therapeutic Benefits:

- **Promotes relaxation and calm:** Reduces anxiety and restlessness
- **Improves circulation:** Enhances blood flow to support general body function and tissue health.
- **Maintains mobility:** Keeps muscles flexible and joints comfortable, encouraging regular movement.
- **Supports sensory awareness:** help re-engage awareness of touch and space.
- **Improves sleep quality:** Relaxation before rest can reduce nighttime pacing and agitation.
- **Enhances the human-animal bond:** Positive touch helps maintain trust and comfort.

Therapy sessions are always adapted to the dog's comfort and tolerance, using soft, slow techniques that create a calm, reassuring experience.

Management and Home Support

- **Regular veterinary check-ups** to monitor progression and manage symptoms.
- **Consistent routines** for feeding, walking, and rest to reduce confusion.
- **Gentle mental stimulation**, such as scent games or low-stress training.
- **Safe, accessible spaces** with clear pathways and non-slip flooring.
- **Balanced diet and supplements** recommended by your vet to support brain health.
- **Therapy and massage** to maintain comfort and emotional well-being.
- **Patience and reassurance** – staying calm and supportive makes a big difference.

With compassionate care and regular therapy, dogs with cognitive dysfunction can continue to enjoy comfort, security, and quality of life.