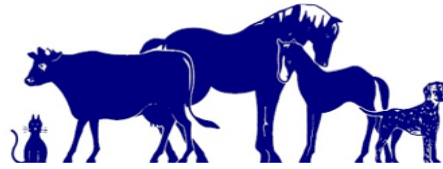


ABN 70 601 832 062



AJ & JL Williams Pty Ltd T/A

WANGARATTA VETERINARY CLINIC

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Friendly service and professional care for all.

SENIOR CATS

My cat is 8 years or older – what do I need to know?

From 8 years of age cats are in their senior years (the equivalent of a human in their 50s) and this is often the time when age related health problems start to show themselves. Because of this, our older patients need a bit of extra care to keep them happy and healthy for as long as possible.

Problems that we see commonly in our seniors:

- Lumps and bumps
- More severe dental disease
- Arthritis
- Dementia
- Organ failure (including heart, kidney, liver)
- Eye problems

What you can do to help:

- Bring your senior cat in twice a year for a check up (this is the equivalent of a senior human visiting the doctor every 3 and a half years!). We recommend a blood test and urine test at least once a year to monitor major organ function for signs of disease.
 - These check ups will help provide peace of mind for you and will allow us to get onto any problems early and begin treatment if necessary.

- We'll get you to fill out a form about your cat's behaviour at home which will help us assess if dementia may be starting to be a problem
- Always tell us if something has changed since the last visit even if you're not sure it's important.
- Be observant of your cat. The signs they show can be very subtle. For example sleeping a lot can be an indication of pain from arthritis.
- Older cats can have other non-medical problems: they may not be so good at grooming themselves anymore and may have occasional toileting accidents, so extra grooming and bedding care can make them much more comfortable too.
- Don't introduce a new cat into your home – cats are solitary animals and a new arrival can cause a huge amount of anxiety and stress for your cat. In particular, having to share resources such as food, water and shelter.

Chronic conditions:

In older age many conditions are chronic and will be with your cat for the rest of their life (such as arthritis, heart failure, thyroid problems and adrenal issues). For any cat that is on long term medication for one of these conditions, regular check-ups are very important, and are required by law for the clinic to continue to supply medication. Regular blood testing is also important to ensure the medications are working and not causing problems.

What we do to help:

- We always aim to find the least invasive and least harmful treatment option to manage long term disease, and this may involve special diets along with more conventional medications.
- From the age of 8 we will not proceed with anaesthesia/surgery without a blood test (and all our surgery patients have an IV drip while under anaesthetic) to minimise risks and speed recovery.
- Some conditions or medications will require a minimum of a check up every 3 months and/or yearly blood tests.

Five common mistakes owners of elderly cats make:

1. Ignoring preventative health care such as vaccinations and worming
2. Not telling the Vet or Vet Nurse about anything odd you've noticed such as changes in behaviour or eating patterns.
3. Not coming in for regular examinations.
4. Assuming that treatment is not worthwhile in old patients then regretting the chance to pursue an effective cure later on.
5. Attributing low activity levels to "old age" when it is often actually arthritic pain.