



Melissa Magnotta, DVM
Brassfield Animal Hospital

recently joined the team at Brassfield Animal Hospital and is excited to help you provide the best care for your pets!

Dr. Magnotta is originally from Connecticut, but has called North Carolina her home for the past few years. She completed her veterinary degree at Oklahoma State University in 2012 and has been in private practice since graduation. Her interests include senior care, dermatology, and pain management. She loves hiking, traveling, spending time with her family, and volunteering in the community. Dr. Magnotta

SENIOR PETS

We wish it were only the grey hairs when it comes to aging! Similar to the elderly, our pets experience issues that are seen more commonly with age: achy joints, senility, and major organ dysfunction to name a few. Veterinary medicine has come a long way in being able to provide care for senior pets and it is our responsibility as pet owners to provide them with the best care into their golden years.

Many senior animals have arthritis in one or more joints. Hesitating to jump on furniture, struggling to stand, and moving slower are signs that your pet may have some joint discomfort. Make sure your home is senior pet friendly and safe, so that normal

daily routines aren't a challenge. Even pools and stairs can pose a danger to an older, unsteady animal. There are a number of products that can help you provide the best care, including ramps, orthopedic bedding, slings, raised food bowls, and carpet runners.

Here at Brassfield Animal Hospital we are well-equipped to help ease those achy joints by utilizing cold laser therapy, acupuncture, and



medication. We can also use prescription diets that contain fatty acids, glucosamine, and antioxidants to promote joint health. Don't forget that added weight makes getting around even harder!

Cats with damaged and weakened muscles may not want to stretch back to groom themselves or use a scratching post to keep their nails trimmed. Sadly, we see too many older pets with matted coats and nails grown into their pads. Help them out! If they won't let you, we can help!

If your older pet has not seen their doctor in the last year, schedule an appointment! Do that blood work your veterinarian has recommended! Age is not a disease, but we tend to see certain ailments more often as animals age. Pay attention to changes in water consumption, appetite, urination, defecation, and activity level. Your observations at home help us with a diagnosis. We recommend semi-annual exams and at least annual blood work, so we can be proactive about your pet's health! Kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes, and hypothyroidism are just a few diseases that we can detect on blood work. Your veterinarian may suggest a diet change, medication, and/or further diagnostics.

Knowing that our pets have similar health complications, we should not be surprised when we see signs of dementia or cognitive dysfunction in aging cats and dogs. Cognitive dysfunction is similar to Alzheimer's disease in people. Barking, difficulty sleeping throughout the night, restlessness, aggression, pacing, confusion, and house-soiling are signs of senility. Be patient with your pet and let your veterinarian know you've picked up on these cues. We can start your pet on a diet with antioxidants and fatty acids, supplements, and sometimes we may consider a medication to help nerves communicate better. Introducing new toys, food puzzles, and exercise can help improve and delay cognitive dysfunction.

Over a year ago, my dad called upset about his 12 year old Labrador Retriever, Leeber. Leeber stopped jumping on the couch, slipped easily when walking, and would fall over when going to the bathroom. My dad thought it was time. Not only did Leeber demonstrate signs of arthritis, but he would bark all night and repeatedly get up and down, unable to relax. After radiographs and blood work, we decided to be aggressive with pain management for arthritis and treatment for cognitive dysfunction. Fast forward a year later, Leeber has more good days than bad days. He takes two pain medications and multiple supplements a day. He is sometimes caught attacking snowmen in the yard, attempting to jump over the fence, and scavenging the floors for food, leaving both father and veterinarian grateful.

Keep a close eye on your senior pet's health and help him get the most out of his golden years.

BRASSFIELD
Animal Hospital

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See ad on page 10.

