

5 ways to help your pet live longer

We all want our pets to live long, healthy lives – and we'd all do just about anything to ensure that our cats and dogs can stay with us as long as possible. What five things can you do to keep your pet safe, happy, and by your side longer? We've listed them below, and chances are, you're probably on top of them already. But one hint may surprise you...

Keep your furry friend indoors

Staying inside, or at least on a leash, protects your pet from all kinds of dangers. Indoor living shields cats from infectious diseases; digestive upset caused by snacking on poisonous plants or other foreign objects; fights with other cats, dogs, wild animals, or mean humans; and speeding cars.

And as pets age, they can't regulate their body temperatures as effectively, making them more prone to serious weather-related ailments like heat stroke if they're outdoors too long.

Of course it's fine to walk your dog, and the occasional (closely supervised) feline foray into the yard isn't the end of the world. But it's particularly important for cats to do their toileting inside; that way, the humans can monitor them for signs of tummy upset, urinary-tract issues, and so on.

Putting a "catio" in your window for bird-watching purposes, and planting cat grass in pots, can bring the outside in -- without compromising Fluffy's health.

Watch his weight

Obesity in dogs and cats causes the same serious health problems that it does in humans – high blood pressure, breathing problems, diabetes, and joint pain. It's not easy to put a portly pet on a diet, but NOT doing so could shorten his lifespan (and from a practical – and more selfish – standpoint, you really don't want to have to give a cat daily insulin injections).

If your dog or cat is on the spherical side, enlist your vet's help to change his diet. Invest in new toys for your cat that will get him more active, and try switching from "free feeding" to controlled portions at specific meal times. Take dogs for longer or more frequent walks, and get strict about table scraps and extra biscuits.

Aging pets who have maintained normal weights for years may start to plump up as their metabolisms slow down. Changing your senior dog or cat's regular food to a formula that's higher in protein and lower in fat may help, and dogs may benefit from "nutriceutical" supplements. Again, consult with your vet.

Don't skip vet appointments

It's tempting to bail on the vet if your pet seems healthy – the exams, shots, and treatments can add up to a big yearly bill if you don't have pet insurance. But our pets can't tell us when they don't feel quite right, or whether that diarrhea is a passing thing or a symptom of something more serious. The vet CAN tell you – sometimes just by looking into your dog's eyes!

As your pet ages, you may need to bring her in more frequently – every six months, instead of every year – for senior-wellness check-ups. Your vet is trained to spot conditions and concerns you can't see, and catching geriatric diseases or cancer early is the best way to find a treatment that time – quality time – to your pet's life.

Dental health is overall health

Most of these tips are common sense – but the importance of taking care of your pet's teeth may come as a surprise. It's the most common major health problem affecting cats

and dogs, actually; the bacteria from dental and gum disease can travel elsewhere in their bodies, causing more serious issues.

With that said, we understand that you feel ridiculous brushing your cat's teeth. (And your cat feels even more ridiculous.) But it might seem less absurd if it adds years to your kitty's life. Check your pet's teeth and gums about once a week, if you can. Feed kibble and treats that promote dental health, and keep an eye out for signs of dental or gum disease, including bad breath, lethargy, decreased appetite, weight loss, and facial swelling. Call the vet if you think your cat or dog is having trouble eating due to mouth or tooth pain. And yes, brush your pet's teeth – using specially formulated brushes and pastes, not "people products." Some pets grow to love the fish-flavored toothpaste; others will fight you tooth and nail. (Forgive the pun.) Even if it's a battle, remind yourself that it's worth fighting – bad teeth can reduce your dog's lifespan 2-4 years in some cases.

Spay and neuter your pets

Spaying or neutering your pet doesn't just prevent overpopulation. It can protect your pet down the line from various reproductive cancers – of the prostate and ovaries, for instance. And some studies have shown that fixed pets live longer than "intact" pets, although scientists aren't quite sure why.

We all love an adorable pile of puppies – but coo at pictures online, and get your pet spayed or neutered.

Fonte: Yahoo!

Disponível em: <<http://shine.yahoo.com/pets/5-ways-to-help-your-pet-live-longer.html>>

Acesso em: 18/11/2011