

最近、食餌の改良や飼育環境の変化（室内飼いなど）、予防医学の普及などで動物の寿命は大幅に伸びてきました。そのせいもあってか以前にはあまりなかった痴呆や腫瘍と言った病気が多くみられるようになってきました。動物の老化現象も人の場合と同じようなものです。例えば足腰が弱る、耳や目が悪くなる、尿が漏れるなどの症状が年をとるにつれて現れてきます。しかし、心不全や腎不全など治療が必要な病気にかかっている事もありますので、具合の悪さを『もう年だから』と片付けてしまわないで、まず獣医師の診察を受けましょう。健康そうに見えても6歳以上になったら定期的に健康診断（身体一般検査、血液検査、レントゲンなど）を受けることをおすすめします。隠れた病気が見つかることがあります。少しでも早く病気を発見し治療を始めれば、より長く快適に過ごすことができます。

7歳以上になったら老齢動物用の食餌を与え、運動量が減ってきたら食餌量も徐々に減らし太らせないようにして下さい。身体を触った時に肋骨に軽く触れる程度が理想的な体重で、肋骨



に全く触れなくなったら太りすぎです。肥満になると心臓や関節に負担がかかり心臓病や関節炎の悪化につながります。また、歯周病などのために固いものが食べられなくなってきたら柔らかいものを数回に分けて与えるなどの工夫をしてみてください。自分で食べることができないなら食べさせてあげましょう。

おもらしをするなら、ハウスの中にペットシーツを敷く、おむつをするなどしてその都度清潔なものに取り替えてあげましょう。身体が汚れたら洗ってあげて下さい。汚れたままにしているとそれが皮膚病の原因になります。

しだいに足腰が弱りついに寝たきりになったら、同じ姿勢ですっと寝ていたり起き上がろうとかがいたりすることで、骨ばった部分に床ずれや擦り傷ができることがありますので、寝床に柔らかいクッションを置いてあげましょう。床ずれができてしまったらそこから感染しないよう消毒し、傷口がジクジクついてくるようなら

早めに獣医師の診察を受けて下さい。飼い主が責任を持って愛情をこめて精一杯の世話をしてあげれば動物は最期まで快適に過ごすことができるでしょう。

Improved diets, changes in how animals are kept (such as increasing numbers living inside the house), and advances in preventive medicine have all led to a great increase in animal life expectancy in recent years. One result is the higher incidence of medical conditions, such as senility and tumours, which were rarely seen before. Aging affects animals in the same way as human beings, with common symptoms including trouble with walking, failing eyesight and hearing, and incontinence.

However, some of these symptoms also indicate heart or liver failure, which require medical treatment, so if you spot such signs in your pet, take them to the vet for examination before putting it all down to old age. Also, periodic check-ups (physical examination, blood tests, X-rays etc.) are recommended for all pets aged 6 years or more, even if they appear to be healthy. This can lead to the early diagnosis of hidden health problems, which can then be treated to ensure your pet will enjoy a better quality of life in later years.

For pets aged 7 years or older, diet should be food labeled for "senior" animals, and as they start running less and generally getting less exercise, the volume of meals should be reduced to prevent obesity. You should be able to feel your pet's ribs faintly through their skin when touching their side; if you cannot feel the ribs at all, your pet is overweight. Obesity burdens the heart and joints, and can lead to heart disease and arthritis.

Another common problem among older animals is gum disease, which prevents them from chewing hard food. If your pet has trouble eating dry food, try switching to softer food, given several times a day. If your pet cannot eat by himself, help him by putting the food in his mouth.

For incontinent animals, place an absorbant pet sheet inside their house or put them in pet diapers, in either case making sure you change them when they get soiled. If their body is soiled by waste, wash them clean as leaving their coats dirty can lead to skin disease.

For pets who have trouble walking, when this reaches the point that they cannot get up at all, staying in the same position all the time or struggling to get up can give rise to bed sores or abrasions. To prevent this, give them a soft cushion to lie on. If you find a bed sore, disinfect it to prevent bacteria from entering the wound. If the sore looks like it is getting infected, bring your pet to the vet for treatment.

Animals, like people, can comfortably achieve great old age if given the proper care. It is the responsibility of pet owners to provide all the loving care their animals need to live out their natural lives with minimal pain and suffering.