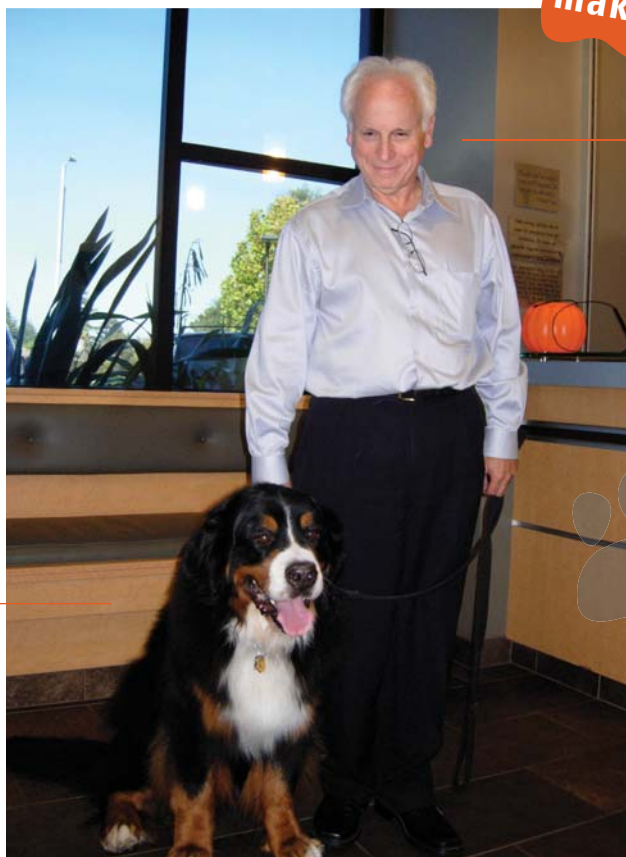


Senior Pets

By Dave Roos, DVM



Healthy Seniors

I have also witnessed and experienced the unique relationship seniors form with older pets, either raised from puppies into adulthood or adopted when they have reached 'grey fur' status.

While conventional wisdom suggests we need to raise our pets as puppies to win their loyalty and affection over time, almost all dogs bond instantly with new owners. Moreover, a mature dog not only ensures a more well-mannered friend that is already house trained but a friend that can train you in important life lessons.

Many of us have learned the benefits of being in the present moment from spiritual leaders and New Age practitioners but I learned this lesson from one of my older dog, "Dutchess," a Staffordshire Terrier, who always accepted "the here and now."

Likewise, my pets re-acquainted me with the spontaneous enthusiasm of my childhood. A ball, a tiny treat or yelling, "Ok let's go!" generated consistent eager responses with unconditional love and nonjudgment from my older dog.

Dutchess was also my personal trainer but without the hourly fees. When she cajoled me with those sad brown eyes begging for a walk, I had to comply. Our daily walks became my primary exercise and a necessary part of my life.

It didn't take me 50 years of veterinary experience to figure out that people love their pets as much as they love their progeny and will go to any lengths to care for them because of that special bond they share.



By pairing up with older dogs, seniors are more likely to enjoy the same type of exercise and play and gain the same level of energy.

Rescuing a senior dog can be a wonderful way to adopt a new pet. However, be mindful of selecting a pet that matches your own personality and lifestyle, and make sure to compare your agility with your potential furry family member to make sure there's a good physical match.

For example, do you want a mellow cocker spaniel that will sit in your lap and watch Jimmy Stewart movies with you or an energetic border collie to walk in the parks with you each morning?

Just as the die is cast on our own behaviors and personality traits, such is the case with our four-legged friends. Many canine traits cannot be changed, including separation anxiety, fear biting and excess barking --making you and your new companion a miserable match.



Oftentimes a trainer or dog behaviorist can teach you how to mitigate some of these behaviors but the dog's basic personality will not change. If you are going to adopt a dog from a rescue organization, consider having a professional evaluate its behavior before you get attached.

Finally, you should also consider the costs associated with caring for a pet. Many rescue organizations, such as the Silicon Valley Humane Society, offer discounted adoption

fees for seniors that take on older pets.

Also, as I have gotten older, good but affordable healthcare has become very important to me because, as we know, medical care can be quite expensive at times.

The same can be true for older dogs. There is pet health insurance which can help reduce some costs but be sure to scrutinize plans for coverage of older dogs. Addressing health problems early on can also save on costly procedures. Be sure to call your vet if you have any concerns about your senior pet.

Dr. Dave Roos, 73, opened Adobe Animal Hospital in Los Altos as a solo practice in 1964. Today he is one of 24 veterinarians at Adobe's newly expanded location at 4470 El Camino Real, also in Los Altos. Dr. Roos has treated thousands of dogs, cats and farm animals, too. 650.948.9661. www.Adobe-animal.com



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