

Feline Arthritis Home Adaptations

There are many things we can do at home to make our felines more comfortable, enabling them to enjoy a good quality of life in their golden years. There are a few factors to consider as detailed below.

- **Feeding**

Situate feeding and water stations in an easy to reach location and try not to move around as older cats may find this confusing.

Consider using a raised food dish or place bowl on a biscuit tin as arthritic cats can find bending their necks painful which may lead to a negative association with food. A wide and shallow dish may be preferable but provide different options.

Feed little and often, warm food to room temperature and offer a variety. Monitor your cat's weight to ensure it's not overweight as additional fat will put strain on arthritic joints (please ask a nurse or vet for more information on senior diets and weight management)

Puzzle feeding is a great way to keep your cat engaged and will provide gentle movement of their joints. You can use egg boxes or toilet tubes to hide kibble too!

- **Garden**

If your cat struggles with their mobility they may be less likely to be able to defend their territory. Accompanying your cat into the garden may help. Check the garden is secure and consider growing cat nip/cat grass and having plenty of hidey areas to make time outside more appealing,

Also, consider a micro-chip cat flap to keep intruders away. Provide a step either side of the flap with a mat allowing your cat outside with more comfort.

- **House**

Flooring: laminate, vinyl or tiled floors can represent a major obstacle for cats with a tendency to slip being a real risk of further injury to joints. Place mats (yoga mats cut to size are good) carpet treads or runners with adhesive strips to prevent slipping..

Accessing favourite locations: add ramps/steps to more difficult to reach areas such as window sills or beds. Remember to ensure these aren't slippery – consider adhering some carpet strips to aid grip here. Place some blankets/cushions below a high area in case of any falls.

Beds: Offer a range of beds in easily accessible locations, free from draughts and disturbance. Warm igloo beds/memory foam orthopedic beds/old folded

mattresses/soft blankets/vetbed/radiator bed (with ramp provided for access) are all good examples. Radiator beds may decrease arthritic pain, particularly on a cold day.

Scratch Posts: Some cats find it uncomfortable using a vertical post so a horizontal scratch post may be more appropriate. Some cats prefer cardboard alternatives or types with a softer covering. Scratching is an important part of keeping nails healthy and marking territory.

- **Toileting**

Litter Tray: A low sided litter tray which is large enough for the cat to turn around easily is a good choice. Have multiple trays in quiet, accessible locations (minimum is 1 per cat plus 1 extra but the more the better) to minimise the likelihood of accident risks with older animals.

-Litter Type: Offer a variety of different litter types – a soft and fine litter (sand) may be more gentle on painful toes. Rough gravel/wood pellets are less preferred.

If your cat prefers toileting in the garden offer soil as a litter or keep an area of the garden dug out specially for this purpose to prevent the cat having to dig too much.

- **Playing**

Gentle play is important to keep joints healthy and helps to create a bond with your cat. Feather rods can encourage hunting behaviour whilst kickeroo toys encourage kicking behaviour.

- **Husbandry**

Grooming: A matted coat could be an indication your cat is struggling to reach certain areas. Many cats will enjoy being groomed as a form of massage and helps keep their coat in good condition whilst helping to identify parasites or lumps. Zoom grooms, grooming mitts or a soft slicker might be preferred choices. Remember to start slowly and adjust to what the cat will tolerate as they have reduced muscle mass and more delicate skin.

-Nail trimming: older cats are highly prone to overgrown claws which will cause further discomfort so it is important to have these clipped regularly and, if necessary and tolerated, the fur between their toes (this will help with grip).

- **Supplements**

Synoquin is a complementary nutraceutical consisting of omega 3 fatty acid (krill), glucosamine and chondroitin which help protect joint cartilage and support mobility. These are in capsule form so can easily be added to food.

- **Acupuncture**

This may be an appropriate alternative therapy to help with your cat's pain. Please ask a member of staff for more information as this is a service which we can offer to our clients.