

## Care of an Older Cavalier

With a little forethought and understanding, your older Cavalier can lead a happy and healthy life, bring many years of companionship to you both.

As with humans, as a dog gets older, certain parts of the body starts to slow down or weaken. Hearing becomes a little bit more difficult, eyesight can deteriorate and life in general can slow down. This need not be a problem if a little thought is given to their special needs.

### **General**

As a dog gets older, they are prone to sleep more deeply and care must be taken that they are not startled suddenly as they may respond with a growl or snap that was unintentional. Children must be taught to respect the dog when it is asleep. A quiet corner of his own with his own space would help him rest peacefully. His bed should be away from draughts and most would be appreciate an extra blanket on cold nights.

If hearing or eyesight is failing, care should be taken when walking the dog off the lead. If they get too far away from you, they may not be able to hear your calls or see you clearly and get confused.

### **Grooming**

Every dog enjoys feeling well groomed and it is no different to an older dog. Do this regularly and you will avoid large tangles. Little matts can be removed painlessly. If your Cavalier has been neutered, there is a tendency for the coat to grow more profusely and matts tend to form behind the ears or tail. This can be painful to the dog if not removed regularly. Also if the dog scratches behind his ears, his claws could get caught in the matts, which could cause him some distress as he tries to get his claws off.

If you give an older dog a bath, it is essential to dry him out thoroughly. As with us, they could catch a chill quicker than when they were younger and would take longer to recover.

If you need to trim the coat of your older dog to a short length, you should put on a dog coat on him when you take him out for a walk. Please enquire about coats knitted from wool for your dog from us, as we may have some in stock.

### **Diet**

If your dog becomes less active, you should reduce the amount of food given to prevent it from becoming overweight. The daily ration divided into smaller more frequent meals will still give the dog something to look forward to even though they are getting less.

Most brands of dog food have specially formulated diets for older dogs and you could change over to what suits you and the dog gradually.

You should be aware of the amount of water an elderly dog drinks as an excessive thirst could indicate a problem, such as diabetes.

### **Eyes**

Caring for eyes of an older Cavalier is no different to a younger one. Wipe eyes with damp cotton wool or eye cleaners to remove any deposits and excess tears.

### **Ears**

As with any dog, young and old, check the inside of the ear weekly for excess wax or signs of infection.

### **Teeth**

Like us, the age the teeth naturally start to decay or fall out. By checking the teeth during regular grooming sessions, any signs of discomfort can be dealt with before they become too painful. Teeth can be cleaned gently by brushing with one of the many special dog toothpaste available in the pet shops. Any bad deposits can be removed by your veterinary surgeon if necessary.

Many older dogs still enjoy chewing a bone or hard biscuit, even though it may take them longer to do so. If you find your dog who regularly enjoys his treat and suddenly does not want it or shows discomfort chewing it, check his teeth to see if they are the cause of the discomfort.

If the dog has lost a number of teeth, they may prefer eating softer food, such as canned dog meat or minced food, which requires less feeding.

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