Caring for Senior Dogs

As our dogs age, their needs change, and so does the way we should care for them. Dogs are masters at hiding illness, and typically by the time symptoms have become obvious, the underlying issue may already be well progressed. Conditions like kidney disease, liver dysfunction, thyroid imbalances, and urinary tract infections are common in older dogs and can often be picked up early with a simple blood and urine test.

Blood test

A blood test can provide a lot of information about your dog's health, including:

- **Kidney and liver function** - detecting early organ changes so treatment can be implemented early to slow down disease progression
- **Blood sugar levels** - identifying diabetes before complications arise
- **Thyroid function** - catching hormone imbalances that affect weight, energy, and coat quality.
- **Blood cell counts** - screening for anaemia, infection, or immune-related conditions.

We typically send these results to our external lab and receive results back within a couple days. If results are required more urgently we are able to use our in-house blood and urine machines which will give us results within an hour.

Urine test

A urinalysis complements blood work by showing how well the kidneys are concentrating urine and whether there are hidden problems such as:

- Early kidney disease
- Urinary tract infections
- Crystals or stones in the bladder
- Diabetes-related changes

Often, changes appear in the urine before they are visible in the blood, making this a vital part of a senior pet's check-up.

Early Detection Means Better Quality of Life

The goal of these tests is not just to diagnose disease, but to catch health problems early when they are most treatable and before they impact your dog's quality of life. With early intervention, many conditions can be managed effectively, helping your senior dog enjoy more happy, comfortable years by your side.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. At what age is my dog considered a senior?
Most dogs are considered senior at around 7 years old, though large and giant breeds may reach senior status closer to 5 years.

2. How often should blood and urine tests be done?
Once a year is recommended for healthy senior dogs, however, some pets with ongoing conditions may need more frequent testing.

3. Will my dog need sedation for these tests?
No, both blood and urine collection are quick, minimally invasive procedures that do not require sedation in most cases. If your dog is anxious we may able to prescribe oral medication to give before their appointment to make their experience more comfortable.

4. How much do these tests cost?
A standard blood test (total annual health profile) will cost $276.40 and a full urine test typically costs $195.50. This does not include any consult charges or if more in depth/ urgent testing is required.

5. What if the results are normal?
That's good news! Normal results give us a valuable baseline to compare against future tests, making it easier to spot even subtle changes in your dog's health over time. We would still recommend annual testing going forward even if results are normal.