

Interview questions for Mr. Rollo

What's your name and organization?

Dr. W. Andrew Rollo

Madison Veterinary Hospital in MADison Heights, MI and Maple Orchard Animal Hospital in West Bloomfield, MI

1. What are some common signs that a dog is entering their senior years?

Dogs slow down with age, may have pain, changes in body, muscle loss, owners perceive them to be limping, going on shorter walks, panting, difficult to get up

Pets usually won't cry

Increased drinking, peeing

Cognition, confused at night, sleeping all day, staring at walls

2. How does aging affect a dog's health and behavior?

Organ loss, decreased mobility and increased pain, relationships with other pets and owners in the house change - they become distant or aggressive

3. What age do you typically consider a dog to be a senior, and does this vary by breed?

Size of the dog matters, smaller dogs live longer

10-25 lbs - 10-12 is senior

25- 50 lbs - 8-10 is senior

Large breed is old by by 7

REALLY large breed (Bernese Mountain dogs, great danes) 5-6

4. Are there specific conditions that tend to affect seniors more than others and if so, what is the solution to these health issues?

pain/arthritis - we do have a lot of treatments available now

Some human meds can even be used for dogs

Hypothyroidism - they gain weight, organ function, heart disease

Heart murmur indicates the heart is changing

5. What are some of the most common health problems seen in senior dogs?

Metabolic diseases - conditions that disrupt the body's chemical processes, often affecting hormone production, digestion, or nutrient absorption.

Hypothyroidism

Diabetes

Cushings Disease - body producing too much steroids

Arthritis & pain

Organ related diseases (kidney, for example)

6. How often should senior dogs have check ups and what should these visits include or look like?

2x/year for physical exams. Check for lumps - some can be concerning, catching early is good

Blood work 1/year - check for metabolic disease - early intervention can be very beneficial

Kidney disease is treatable in early stage, but harder to treat in advanced stage

7. Are there any changes in vaccinations or medications that need to be considered for senior dogs?

No new vaccinations

Rabies is a 3 year vaccine and its the law, so keep up with that

Depending on lifestyle, kennel cough can be rough so we look for that
Medications depend on the disease
Joint supplements help a lot - around age 7 - keeps inflammatory disease at bay. Very safe.

8. Can diet or nutrition help manage common conditions in senior dogs? What are some recommended diets and brands?

Senior diets - less calories bc we're not burning as much off
If they have a specific medical condition - use the diet for that
Brands that Dr. Rollo recommends:

Hills Science

Royal Canin

Purina

Most other brands are spending their money on commercials and not on quality.

9. Are there specific activities that are safe and beneficial for aging dogs?

Let them set their own pace. Quality of life is important. Dogs will tell us what they can do. Movement is key to maintain muscle mass

10. How can pet owners address changes in behavior such as anxiety or confusion, which are common in older dogs?

Anxiety can get better or worse with age. Medications are available. Human anti-anxiety meds like prozac, trazedone (sedative and anti anxiety), thunderstorms/fireworks. Cognitive- based on owner observations. Selegiline medication
Using brain muscle - engage dogs in activities. Puzzles, food, games, activities.

11. What are some common mistakes that pet owners make when caring for an aging dog that should be avoided?

Wait for the dog to cry - this is rare.

Ignoring regular vet checks - early intervention is important

12. Where can pet owners find additional resources for senior dog care, where it be books, websites, or support groups?

Pet food companies have great resources bc of their senior diets. Tutorials.

Pharmaceutical companies - big 3: Zoetis, Merck Animal Health, Boehringer Ingelheim

13. How can veterinarians support pet owners who are struggling with the emotional aspects of caring for an aging dog?

Every owner is different - listening to them, hearing their needs. Cost is an issue.

Payments are due day of service and that's hard to determine. Customary to give options and be OK with their answers. History of the pet. Lifestage of the owner - an older owner might not be able to deal with the issues of a larger dog.

14. What are some preventative measures that pet owners take to ensure their senior dog stays as healthy as possible?

Stay on top of Heartworm, flea and tick prevention - parasite prevention

Regular vet visits

Appropriate weight, joint supplements