

Alzheimer's Disease in Dogs

Leslie Sinclair, DVM, explains how Alzheimer's Disease can affect your senior dog.

Leslie Sinclair, DVM

Q. Can my dog get Alzheimers disease?

Leslie Sinclair, DVM says: Its not uncommon for an elderly dog to wander aimlessly, appear lost or confused even in his own home, appear not to recognize familiar people, forget his house-training, or develop an abnormal sleep pattern. Traditionally, these old-dog behaviors have been dismissed as normal aging changes, but modern veterinary research has found that many of them are caused by changes in the brain similar, although not identical, to the effect of Alzheimers disease in people. A combination of these behaviors that cannot be explained by any other medical diagnosis (such as a brain tumor) are now referred to as canine cognitive dysfunction syndrome, or CDS.

More than one mode of treatment for CDS is available. The drug selegiline, also called L-deprenyl, was one of the first two drugs ever approved by the FDA for treatment of behavioral problems in animals. Selegiline reverses the symptoms of CDS in many dogs. A commercial antioxidant diet that researchers claim diminishes the signs of age-related behavioral changes is also available by prescription from your veterinarian.

Don't ignore or dismiss signs of aging in your older dog. Whether they are caused by CDS or by another treatable condition such as a urinary tract infection you can work with your veterinarian to address these symptoms, resulting in a happier, and often longer, life for your dog.

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