Feline Healthy Ageing: getting the most out of your mature consult

Dr Nathalie Dowgray, Head of ISFM
Outline

- What is ageing and why ‘mature’ is an important life stage
- What can we do? Key points for the mature examination
- Findings from the Feline Healthy Ageing Clinic
What is ageing?

Ageing is the process of growing older.

Healthy ageing is the process of growing older in the absence of age-related diseases.
Geriatric cats are cats that develop age related disease.
To extend healthy life span the goal is to delay the development of age-related disease and slow the progression of age related disease.
Biology of ageing

The fountain of youth: interventions

• Caloric restriction / dietary energy restriction / intermittent fasting

• Exercise / high intensity training

• Nutraceuticals:
  • Resveratrol
  • Metformin
  • Rapamycin
  • Spermidine
What can we do?

• **Chronic kidney disease** 8–10 years
• **Hyperthyroidism** 9–10 years
• **Hypertension** >10 years + CKD & hyperthyroidism
• **Diabetes mellitus** >6 years
• **Osteoarthritis / degenerative joint disease** >6 years
• **Heart disease** >9 years
• **Cancer** odds increase with age to 16 years

Obesity 7-12 years
What can we do?

The biological processes that lead to the physical appearance of ageing and the development of age-related disease are starting to occur from around 7 years of age.
Opportunities: Mature

Preventative health care
- Vaccination
- Parasite prophylaxis

Early recognition of disease
- Obesity
- Dental disease
- Musculoskeletal disease
- Hypertension
- CKD
- Hyperthyroidism
Monitor – regular through clinical examinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMINATION</th>
<th>KITTEN</th>
<th>JUNIOR</th>
<th>ADULT</th>
<th>MATURE</th>
<th>SENIOR</th>
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<td>Every 6m</td>
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www.catcare4life.org
Frequency of visits

Every 12 months with a vet

Consider interim 6 monthly
• Monitor weight and BCS
• Monitor for dental disease

Photo Credit: Laura Beard “Barry”
Monitor – for obesity
### Body Condition Score

**Body Condition Score (recommended 9 point scale):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1     | Ribs, spine, and pelvis:  
- Visible (especially short hair cats)  
- Pronounced, very easy to palpate  
- No fat covering  
- Marked abdominal tuck  
- Loss of body muscle |
| 2     | Between 1 and 3 |
| 3     | Ribs, spine, and pelvis:  
- Easily palpated  
- Very little fat covering  
- Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible  
- Obvious waist behind ribs |
| 4     | Between 3 and 5 |
| 5     | Ideal  
- Ribs and spine:  
- Palpable but not visible  
- Slight (but not excessive) fat cover  
- Waist and abdominal tuck present  
- Minimal abdominal fat pad |
| 6     | Between 5 and 7 |
| 7     | Ribs and spine:  
- Not easy to palpate  
- Moderate fat covering  
- Little or no waist present  
- Rounding of abdomen |
| 8     | Between 7 and 9 |
| 9     | Ribs and spine:  
- Hard to palpate  
- Marked fat cover  
- Fat over other body areas  
- No waist, marked abdominal fat  
- Marked inguinal fat pad |
Muscle condition

**Muscle Condition Score:**

|-----------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|

Determination of MCS is based on palpation and subjective assessment of the muscle mass over the lumbar spine, head and scapulae.
Dental disease

Recognise and address early
• Remove plaque and calculus
• Institute preventative dental care
Musculoskeletal disease

Owner assessment of cat behavior and movement
Orthopedic examination

https://painfreecats.org/the-fmpi/

Photo Credit: Rosa Fay “Stevie”
Hypertension

Start measuring blood pressure in mature cats to habituate them.

Always measure in cats with a risk factor of 2nd hypertension.
Laboratory testing

Minimum database
• CBC
• Biochemistry
• Urinalysis
• +/- Thyroxin

Start from Mature life stage to establish normal

Approach one: Regularly screen all cats from 7 years of age

Approach two: Monitor closely for clinical changes in history and screen cats under 11 years if applicable
Monitor – gold standard Vs limited resources

- Physical examination
  - Oral examination
  - Dental examination
  - Weight
  - Body Condition Score
  - Muscle condition

- Discuss diet
- Discuss vaccination
- Discuss parasite control
Get the most out of your appointment

• [www.catfriendlyclinic.org](http://www.catfriendlyclinic.org)

• See: [https://catfriendlyclinic.org/vets-nurses/handling-of-cats/](https://catfriendlyclinic.org/vets-nurses/handling-of-cats/) for videos of cat handling

• International Cat Care YouTube Channel
The Feline Healthy Ageing Clinic

• 206 cats
• Median age 8 years (IQR 7-9)
• February 2017 – October 2019
• Based in north-west UK
Weight and BCS of 206 cats 7-10 years
Blood pressure from 194 cats
Conditions diagnosed at enrolment

- 10% azotaemic
- 1 known diabetic
- 2.7% newly diagnosed hyperthyroid
- 29% had heart murmurs
- 5% had BP>160mmHg
Dental disease – 205 cats examined

• Dental disease in 54%
• FORLS 29%
• Stomatitis 4%

• 82% of cats had dental disease recorded over the course of the study
Orthopedic examination; 182 cats

- 58% had findings of reduced range of motion, pain or joint thickening on orthopaedic examination
- These cats were significantly older $P=0.002$
- 70% of cats had abnormal findings on OE over the course of the study
Application to practice

• Weigh and BCS cats at every visit
• Examine their teeth at every visit
• Start to assess for musculoskeletal disease from middle age
• Prevent obesity
Important

• Update the owner at each visit on
  • Weight
  • BCS
  • Weight change
  • Dental status.

• Start to make them aware of the signs of DJD/OA in cats.
Thank you