

## Care of an older Cavalier

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

As with humans, as a dog gets older certain parts of the body start to slow down or weaken. Hearing can become 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 a snap that was unintentional. Children must be taught to respect the dog when it is asleep.

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.

Every dog enjoys feeling well groomed and clean. Regular grooming sessions will keep the dogs coat in good condition, and any little matts can be removed painlessly. If the dog has been neutered there is a tendency for the coat to grow more profusely and matts forming behind the ears or tail can be painful to the dog if not removed regularly. If the dog needs a bath, it is essential that it is thoroughly dry before being let out. As with us, they could catch a chill quicker than when they were younger. Their beds should be away from draughts, and most would appreciate an extra blanket on cold nights.

The eyes should be wiped with damp cotton wool to remove any deposits and excess tears.

### Teeth

Like us, with 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. These come in such flavours as beef or chicken so the dogs look forward to having their teeth cleaned. Any bad deposits of tartar can be removed by the Vet if need be. Many older dogs still enjoy chewing a bone or hard biscuit, even though it may take them a lot longer to eat it now.

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

### Feeding

If the dog becomes less active then, naturally the amount of food given needs to be reduced 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.

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