

Behavior Changes to Watch



Which behavior changes should we watch out for in our pets - especially our aging pets - that may indicate a health problem?

Why do pets camouflage or hide their problems?

A great reason for that is despite how domesticated our dogs and cats are, they still retain some of the hard wiring from many thousands of years ago when they were out in the wild. And a wild animal that looks injured, or looks sick, is going to be targeted by a predator. That's just how nature works.

Our dogs and our cats, despite being the sort of pampered, loved creatures that they are, will still on some level make that effort to hide their illness. Which puts the burden on us. And when I say us, I mean both myself as a veterinary professional and everybody else as a pet owner. The burden is on us to keep a very, very close eye on anything that could indicate an early sign of a problem.



Looking for subtleties. Some of the subtleties that are very, very significant would be:

- **Appetite:** Eating either more or less can be significant
- **Water Consumption:** If you see your pet drinking more water than usual (or less) or maybe urinating more than usual (or less), that can be an underlying sign of something that may or may not be serious, but is absolutely worth noting
- **Activity Level:** Most dogs who were once really active and exuberant didn't just slow down by choice... they were slowed down by necessity. Has your dog's activity level changed?
- **General Routine:** Do you notice anything out of the ordinary from your pet's general routine? Dogs and cats are creatures of habit, so do you notice anything different?

It's important to spot and report these things early to your veterinarian, as early detection is the best defense we have!