



Cognitive Health Checklist

An owner screen for an ageing mind in dogs and cats, using the DISHAA framework

PETSLIKEMINE
SENIOR PETS

PET NAME	VET PRACTICE	DATE
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Older dogs and cats can develop changes in memory and sharpness. It is real, common, and badly under-recognised, because the early signs are so easily written off as "just getting old". No single sign proves anything: what matters is the cluster, and whether it is getting more frequent over time. Vets group the signs with the word DISHAA.

DISHAA: TICK ANYTHING YOU HAVE NOTICED

- Disorientation: briefly lost in familiar rooms, staring at walls, standing on the hinge side of a door
- Interactions: clingier and more anxious, or drifting away and greeting you less
- Sleep-wake: the day-night clock flipping, so they pace or call in the small hours
- House-soiling: a reliably clean pet starting to have accidents indoors, or outside the tray
- Activity: aimless wandering, doing less, or repetitive licking and circling
- Anxiety: new worries, often out of proportion

IT IS A DIAGNOSIS OF EXCLUSION: SEE YOUR VET FIRST

Before any of this is put down to the mind, the things that look just like it are ruled out: pain (very often arthritis), fading sight or hearing, high blood pressure, an overactive thyroid or other hormonal disease, kidney disease, even a urine infection. Many are treatable. Treat the sore hips, and sometimes the pet you thought you were losing comes a little way back.

A SUDDEN CHANGE IS DIFFERENT: RING YOUR VET TODAY

An ageing mind comes on slowly, over months. Confusion that arrives over hours or a day or two, a collapse, a seizure, or a pet who is abruptly disoriented is not the slow story and needs a same-day call, not watchful waiting.

WHAT HELPS YOUR VET MOST

- Film it: a short clip by day and one of any night-time restlessness (the night signs are never there at the clinic)
- Tell your vet plainly that you are worried about memory and sharpness: naming it gets it taken seriously
- Note when it started and how often ("a few weeks, two or three nights a week, getting worse")
- Re-check in about 3 months to see the direction of travel

If you also live with a cat, never give a cat a brain supplement made for dogs: some contain alpha-lipoic acid, which is toxic to cats.

Written and reviewed by Dr Alastair Greenway MRCVS and Claire Greenway BVM&S MRCVS. This sheet explains and records. It does not diagnose or prescribe. Always follow your own vet's instructions.

How to use. Tick what you see, watch the pattern over time, and take this plus a clip to your vet to rule out the treatable mimics first. A wellbeing aid, not a substitute for veterinary advice.

**THE CLUSTER AND THE TREND MATTER,
NOT ONE ODD MOMENT**