

# Updated feline senior care guidelines for the veterinary community

June 29 2021

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The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) has released the updated *2021 AAFP Feline Senior Care Guidelines* to be published in the July issue of the *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*. This update

provides emerging advances in feline medicine with respect to the aging cat. The Task Force of experts provides a thorough current review in feline medicine that emphasizes the individual senior patient.

As defined in the *2021 AAHA/AAFP Feline Life Stage Guidelines*, cats over 10 years of age are considered to be 'senior.' Understanding the changing needs of each individual senior cat is critical for both veterinary professionals and cat owners. "Veterinary professionals are encouraged to use the *2021 AAFP Feline Senior Care Guidelines* to enhance their assessment and treatment of age-associated [medical conditions](#) and to provide guidance to clients so they are included in their cat's health care team," stated Task Force Co-chair, Hazel Carney, DVM, MS, DABVP (Canine/Feline).

The Guidelines address the importance of regular veterinary visits which includes a minimum of every six months for senior cats 10 to 15 years old in order to best track and manage health-related issues and detect disease early. Healthy senior cats over the age of 15 should be examined every four months. Cats with chronic health issues may need to be seen even more frequently depending on the severity of illness. "The newly emerging concept of frailty is introduced in these Guidelines and how practitioners can incorporate this into the senior cat assessment. They also detail common issues in aging cats including [pain management](#), nutrition and weight management, diseases and conditions, [quality of life](#), and [end of life decisions](#)," said Michael Ray, DVM, Task Force Co-chair.

Discussion is included on how quality of life (QOL) and health-related quality of life (HRQOL) impacts the aging cat, and emphasizes veterinarians and cat owners partnering to make well-informed decisions for the individual senior cat. The Task Force also recognizes the impact caring for an aging cat has on the cat owner. Veterinarians are asked to consider four budgets of care when making treatment plans: financial,

time, emotional, and physical. The weight of each of these budgets will vary for each cat owner and it is important to recognize this when having decision-making discussions.

**More information:** Michael Ray et al, 2021 AAEP Feline Senior Care Guidelines, *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery* (2021). [DOI: 10.1177/1098612X211021538](https://doi.org/10.1177/1098612X211021538)

Provided by SAGE Publications

Citation: Updated feline senior care guidelines for the veterinary community (2021, June 29) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-06-feline-senior-guidelines-veterinary.html>

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