



*Dr Kay Pitkeathly BVSc*

109 Billa Road, Corner Menai Road, Menai NSW 2234

Telephone: (02) 9541 1455 Fax: (02) 9543 1756

[menaivet@menaivet.com.au](mailto:menaivet@menaivet.com.au)

## Could your elderly cat have dementia

Cats age, just like people and unfortunately sometimes with age they lose their short term memory and you may see cognitive decline or dementia.

You may notice:

- Your cat “forgets” that they have already been fed and asks for food.
- They may stare at a wall or into space; they may get stuck in strange places.
- They may look lost or disorientated.
- Altered sleep / wake cycles may mean they are vocal at night.
- They may toilet outside the litter tray.
- They may become anxious and distressed.
- They often sleep more, but they also may be demanding of attention when they want it, however some cats hide and avoid interactions with people so this variable.



These signs are often seen with medical problems. It is very important that you take your cat to the vet and have a full physical examination including blood pressure check, blood and urine test to look for health problems such as thyroid disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, arthritis etc.



Older pets want to feel safe, be comfortable and have a low stress lifestyle. Things that cause stress to a cat are:

- Any changes
- A new pet
- Different people
- A favoured person moving out
- Changing the furniture
- Changing homes

- Sometimes to make an older cat feel safe they need to be separated from other pets e.g a room only they go in, or a cupboard or bed or high shelf or hidey hole of some type that is their own safe space. Older pets may have trouble with stairs.
- Litter trays may need to be flatter or have a lower edge for older cats that can't step high to get in. Often extra litter trays help as an older cat may not look too far for the tray when they want to go.
- Night lights can help reduce confusion and disorientation.
- Heated beds in cold weather make older cats more comfortable (or sharing a bed with their owner)
- Routine is something older cats want. They like having regular feed times and predictable interactions with people such as play time, lap time, brushing etc.



## Medications

There are many medications that can help older pets with dementia and your vet will advise you best.

- Foods: added anti-oxidants, supplements such as fish oil (or regularly feed sardines or other oily fish) and glucosamines can all help
- Pain relief: many older pets have chronic low grade pain with arthritis. Cats feel pain the same as people, but due to their instincts do not show pain in front of others.
- Feliway: diffuser or spray can help relieve anxiety.
- Thyroid and kidney problems are very common in older cats and your vet will advise how to best manage them.
- There are many medications for different problems - but you need to be advised by your vet what is best for your cat.

