



Feline dementia

With improved nutrition and healthcare, cats are now living to a greater age than they use to. Sadly, this means we are seeing an increasing number of “senile” cats - indeed it has been estimated that half of all cats over the age of fifteen suffer from some degree of dementia.

Signs of dementia

- Reduced interaction with people
- Reduced activity
- Reduced grooming
- Inappropriate toileting
- Changed sleep patterns
- Aimless wandering
- Getting lost
- Confusion or disorientation
- Inappropriate vocalisation

What causes dementia?

Dementia, or “cognitive dysfunction syndrome” is thought to be caused by reduced blood flow to the brain, protein deposits within the brain, and damage to the brain from free radicals. It results in a reduced mental faculty. Several other diseases seen in elderly cats can also affect brain function, while conditions such as arthritis may mimic some of the symptoms of dementia.

What can we do about it?

Encouraging activity in elderly cats (for example by playing with them) helps to keep the brain active and healthy. Increase the number of litter trays around the house to encourage appropriate training. Specific diets high in antioxidants may reduce ongoing brain damage - supplements such as vitamin E and evening primrose oil may also help.

Affected cats are easily upset by change, so try to keep a consistent routine

Regular health checks in elderly cats will enable an early diagnosis of conditions such as hyperthyroidism and high blood pressure, that can cause brain damage.

There is no medication licensed for the treatment of this condition in cats, however several treatments, including drugs aimed at reducing anxiety, and increasing blood flow to the brain, have been used.

For more information on feline dementia, please speak to one of the practice vets.