



Safety Tips for Senior Pets

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You already know you need to puppy- or kitten-proof your home until those lovable rascals are a little older and wiser. It's less obvious, but just as important, that the gradual changes in strength, agility, vision, hearing, and cognitive function the senior pet may call for adjustments. Here are some common safety hazards to be on the lookout for.

Indoors

Stairs

Arthritis, loss of strength, or spinal disorders can make stairs challenging. Non-skid runners or treads can add traction. If your pet could stumble or fall, consider blocking stairs with a baby gate or other barrier.

For 1-4 steps, some pets might find a ramp easier. A ramp should be stable, attach securely, have good traction, and have an angle of incline no more than 20 degrees. If possible, position it against a vertical surface or wall to help prevent falls. Unsteady pets will need hands-on help.

Floors

Slippery flooring like tile and hardwood can cause slips and falls. Try area rugs, carpet runners, or carpet remnants with a non-skid bottom, or yoga mats. At minimum, the pet should be able to access food, water, and their potty area without navigating slick floors.

Children and other pets

Young children or other animals may not understand a senior pet's signals when they aren't up to roughhousing. Even well-intentioned gestures like a hug can upset a pet who is sore or needs to rest. Supervision and even separation may be necessary.

Noise

The aging brain may become more sensitive to sound. Loud music, televisions, or voices may be distressful, especially if the pet cannot escape when they have had too much.

Temperature

Senior pets and those with respiratory disease cannot regulate their body temperature well, leaving them prone to heat stroke. A comfortable range is between 70 and 85 degrees F. Plenty of fresh water should be available.

Sleeping Areas

If falling off furniture is a concern, a soft bed with thick padding should be provided at ground level. We recommend a waterproof covering surrounded with a removable / washable layer. Finally, an absorbent top layer (towels, fleece, or puppy pads will work) will help the pet stay clean and dry in case of accidents. In warmer weather, some pets may prefer a raised cot.

Other Hazards

Pets with cognitive dysfunction may wander or walk in circles, bump into things, or get stuck behind couches and between dining table chairs. Block access to such areas and check for any sharp corners or tripping hazards. Secure tall or heavy furniture to a wall.

Outdoors

Weather

Protection from sun, rain, and wind should be available. If alone, can the pet move to a more comfortable location when needed?

Swimming pools

It's tragically common for senior pets, even dogs that were once excellent swimmers, to fall into pools or spas and drown. If there is any doubt, prevent unsupervised access.

Other hazards

Check the yard for gardening tools or other sharp objects that could be stepped or tripped on.

Final Thoughts

Some senior pets may need confinement in a crate, pen, or small room when alone. Provide entertainment to help him or her adapt. Look for treat dispensing toys and puzzles, or stuff a Kong with cheese or peanut butter. Some pets like the TV, classical music, or even an audiobook playing in the background.

Adjusting to the needs of older pets calls for patience and creativity. Hopefully these ideas give you a starting point to help keep your pet safe and comfortable as they age.

Do you have questions for us? Email info@armsofaloha.com or call 808-435-3006.