

In Conclusion

Many dogs are not examined for mental deterioration until the symptoms have become quite severe. Some of these pets may show a poor response to L-Deprenyl due to the extent of their existing deterioration. L-Deprenyl should be used as early as possible in dogs exhibiting signs of mental deterioration.

The aging process cannot be avoided in our pets any more than we can avoid it ourselves, however, the use of proper nutrition, exercise, and L-Deprenyl (in select cases exhibiting mental deterioration) may allow dogs to live longer and more complete lives.



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Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome In Dogs

Scientists know that pets, like people, are susceptible to various forms of organ failure along with a decline in their immune systems with age. Aging pets have increased risk of kidney and heart disease, arthritis, blindness, deafness, cancer, hormone disorders and mental deterioration.

There is a fine line between natural old age and disease. Signs that were once dismissed as those of "old age" are now being investigated more closely to determine the cause, and hopefully, treatment.

A major area of research in animals and humans is the cause of mental deterioration. The medical term for mental deterioration is Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome. Research has shown that dogs with signs of Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome have Alzheimer-like lesions on the brain.

The Aging Process: can it be slowed down?

The Symptoms

The symptoms of mental deterioration in an older dog may include a decreased ability to recognize familiar people, places and other animals. In addition, the dog may become less interested in food, may fail to respond to commands and may develop changes in its sleep-wake cycle (awake, pacing at night). There may also be accidents in the house in the absence of any specific physical or behavioral causes. We have always referred to these dogs as “just getting old” but is that really correct?

The Cause

Research in humans and animals has shown that there is a loss of the neurotransmitter Dopamine within certain areas of the brain in patients with cognitive dysfunction. Treatment has been directed at elevating and preserving Dopamine levels in the brain and reducing “free radicals”. Free radicals are natural by-products of metabolism that build up within the various cells of the body and interfere with normal cellular function.

Free radicals are thought to be involved in almost every age-related disorder including cancer.

The Treatment

A drug called L-Deprenyl is used in people with Parkinson’s Disease and with Alzheimer’s. It is also used in dogs with Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome (mental deterioration). L-Deprenyl increases both dopamine levels and nerve function. This drug is also beneficial because it appears to promote naturally-occurring free radical scavengers.

The response to L-Deprenyl can vary from patient to patient. Some dogs show dramatic improvement in brain function while others show little improvement. Dogs that improve will be more alert and with less “old dog confusion”.