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## Feline Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome

### **WHAT IS IT?**

Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome, or CDS, is the age related deterioration of cognitive abilities characterized by behavioral changes that cannot be wholly attributed to general medical conditions. CDS is often referred to as “senility” and closely resembles dementia found in humans with Alzheimer’s disease.

CDS is not “normal aging”. A number of pathological changes are suspected to play a role in its development. The progressive, degenerative course of canine CDS involves a gradual decline of cognitive abilities sufficient to produce functional disability in the home. A recent study concluded that greater than 62% of cats over the age of 8 years had at least one symptom of CDS.

### **SIGNS**

- Disorientation & wandering aimlessly
- Decreased activity
- Abnormal sleep/wake patterns (including sleeping more, pacing and vocalizing at night)
- Problems using the litter box
- Inability to recognize people or surroundings
- Decreased or altered responses to family members
- Staring at walls or into space for long periods of time, especially at night
- Withdrawal from the family
- Increased aggression towards family members or other dogs

### **DIAGNOSIS**

The first step in diagnosing CDS is recognition of signs, frequently observed first by the pet owner. Next, the veterinarian should conduct a thorough physical exam to rule out medical diseases as the cause of the behavior changes. This may include routine blood work or other laboratory tests to identify underlying disease. CDS is a common, recognizable condition in senior cats. Understanding the syndrome and behavioral changes associated with it can help pet owners better deal with their aging friend and improve the quality of life for the cat.

### **TREATMENT**

75% of cats with CDS show significant improvement when placed on Anipryl, a medication used in the treatment of Parkinson’s disease in humans. Anipryl is an MAOB inhibitor and works by increasing levels of a neurotransmitter in the brain called Dopamine. It can slow or reverse the progression of some of the signs of CDS. Ask your veterinarian how much it would cost to treat your cat with Anipryl.

If possible, try to keep things familiar by not moving the furniture or litter box around. Keep litter boxes in several different locations so that your cat will not have to search very hard to find one. To prevent accidents or wandering, keep doors closed to basements and other areas that are dangerous for your cat.