



[Visit our Website](#)

HRI Dogs: Senior Dogs

As you have seen from our statistics we get older dogs very often. Here is one story about HRI volunteer Pat Potter's a senior dog, but there are many.

In 2008 HRI received a surrender request for an 11-year-old female Havanese. According to her family, she had a heart murmur and constant bladder problems. She was "going everywhere in their house". As a foster home, I was contacted to pick her up and foster her until she could be ready for adoption. Little did I know that call was going to bring a sweet little girl into our home and our hearts.

Her family got her at 12 weeks. She had been with them her whole life. Frannie came to me as a tiny senior, not knowing what was going on, understandably confused and frightened. Her vet appointment confirmed bladder stones and a grade 2 heart murmur. Her heart murmur was not serious enough to prevent surgery to remove the bladder stones. Her surgery was successful and the stones were oxalate stones. She would need to be watched for recurring stones.

In spite of age and health, Frannie lived her life to the fullest. Her heart murmur was controlled by medication and her bladder stones never recurred. She attended each Havanese Club National Specialty and took great pride in walking in each Havanese Rescue Inc parade. Her story was read to tears and applause.

In 2010 Frannie attended her last HCA National Specialty in California. She had a grand time. She toured San Francisco where she was the "star". Many people took pictures of Miss Frannie in her stroller. She dined each night on salmon, mashed potatoes, and mac and cheese from Whole Foods. She "crashed" the HCA dinner because she was not about to be left in a hotel room when fun was going on without her. She visited Carmel where she found new adventures.

Fostering Frannie taught me that life could be short and you have to enjoy each day and always "stop and sniff the roses" In September 2010 she quietly

went into our bedroom, curled up on a soft rug, and left us.

Fancy Francis: (AKA Ms. Frannie, Frannie Foo) what a joy it was to have you as part of our lives. Because of you, our home became a foster home for other Senior HRI dogs.



Frannie Foo



Frannie and Pat

FYI

Tips For Your Senior Dogs

What can you do to help your senior dog? Here are some tips:

Schedule regular visits with your veterinarian. Your dog needs to be examined at least yearly if it appears healthy, as many diseases are hidden and not apparent. Remember it is much cheaper to prevent disease than it is to treat it!

Ask for a body condition evaluation during each vet visit.

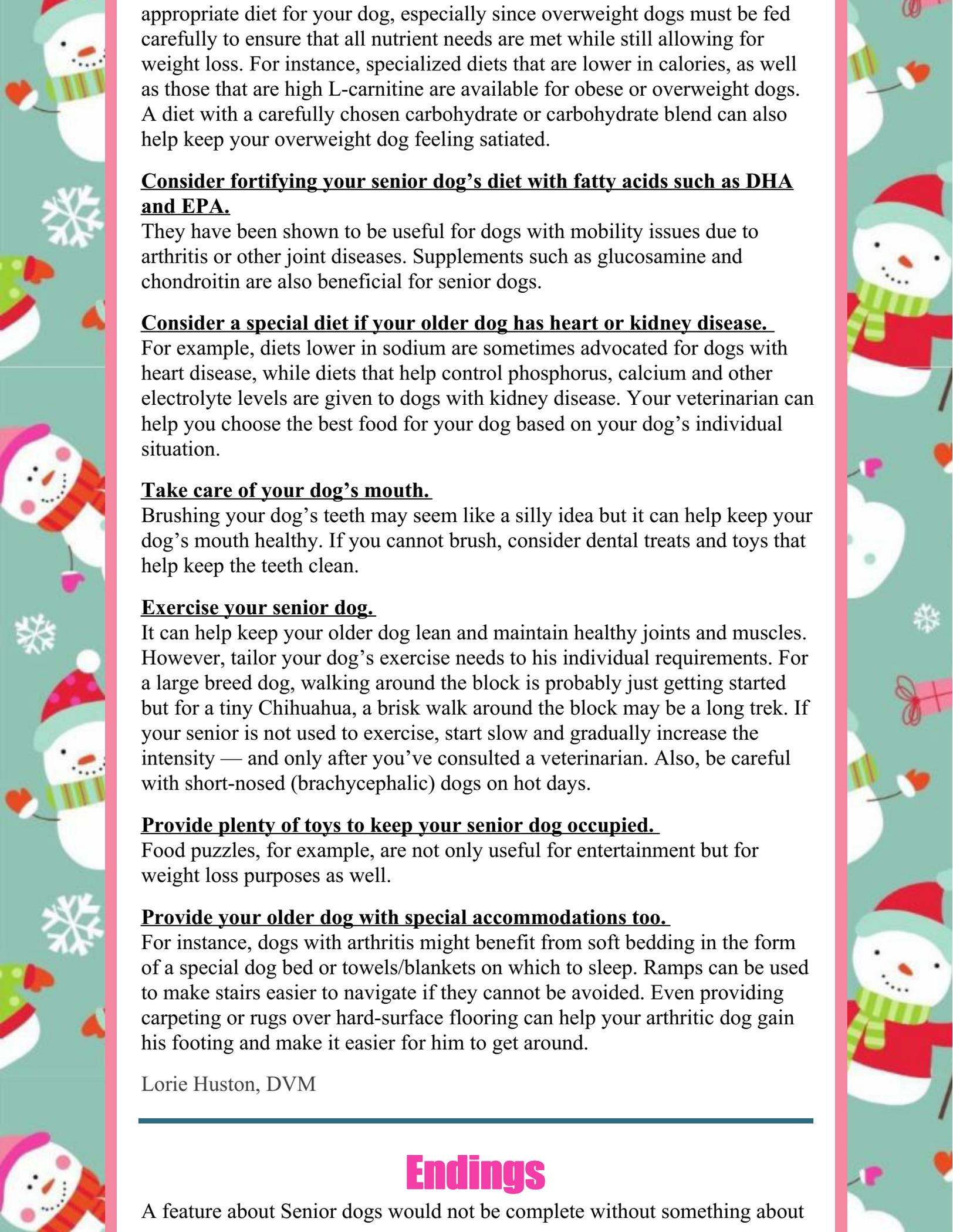
Body condition is crucial to determining whether your senior dog is overweight, underweight, or at ideal body weight. In fact, you should also ask your veterinarian to show you how to evaluate your dog's body condition at home.

Feed your older dog a high-quality diet.

Also, learn to read the dog food label and choose a diet that is appropriate for your dog's age and lifestyle.

Use food to keep your senior dog at its ideal body weight.

Overweight dogs have a higher incidence of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, skin disease, even cancer. Your veterinarian can help you choose an



appropriate diet for your dog, especially since overweight dogs must be fed carefully to ensure that all nutrient needs are met while still allowing for weight loss. For instance, specialized diets that are lower in calories, as well as those that are high L-carnitine are available for obese or overweight dogs. A diet with a carefully chosen carbohydrate or carbohydrate blend can also help keep your overweight dog feeling satiated.

Consider fortifying your senior dog's diet with fatty acids such as DHA and EPA.

They have been shown to be useful for dogs with mobility issues due to arthritis or other joint diseases. Supplements such as glucosamine and chondroitin are also beneficial for senior dogs.

Consider a special diet if your older dog has heart or kidney disease.

For example, diets lower in sodium are sometimes advocated for dogs with heart disease, while diets that help control phosphorus, calcium and other electrolyte levels are given to dogs with kidney disease. Your veterinarian can help you choose the best food for your dog based on your dog's individual situation.

Take care of your dog's mouth.

Brushing your dog's teeth may seem like a silly idea but it can help keep your dog's mouth healthy. If you cannot brush, consider dental treats and toys that help keep the teeth clean.

Exercise your senior dog.

It can help keep your older dog lean and maintain healthy joints and muscles. However, tailor your dog's exercise needs to his individual requirements. For a large breed dog, walking around the block is probably just getting started but for a tiny Chihuahua, a brisk walk around the block may be a long trek. If your senior is not used to exercise, start slow and gradually increase the intensity — and only after you've consulted a veterinarian. Also, be careful with short-nosed (brachycephalic) dogs on hot days.

Provide plenty of toys to keep your senior dog occupied.

Food puzzles, for example, are not only useful for entertainment but for weight loss purposes as well.

Provide your older dog with special accommodations too.

For instance, dogs with arthritis might benefit from soft bedding in the form of a special dog bed or towels/blankets on which to sleep. Ramps can be used to make stairs easier to navigate if they cannot be avoided. Even providing carpeting or rugs over hard-surface flooring can help your arthritic dog gain his footing and make it easier for him to get around.

Lorie Huston, DVM

Endings

A feature about Senior dogs would not be complete without something about

the ending. The day comes for them, as for everyone, and it is a very very hard time. It is the hardest thing about owning a dog, but it is also important to try to do the best we can.

Hillcrest Veterinary Hospital in South Africa shared a passionate post written by a vet on its Facebook page explaining why, in the vet's opinion, people should never leave pets who are being put down on their own.

When you are a pet owner it is inevitable, the majority of the time, that your pet will die before you do," the post, which has now gone viral, reads. "So if and when you have to take your pet to the vet's office for a humane pain-free ending I want you all to know something. You have been the center of their world for THEIR ENTIRE LIVES!!!! "It is devastating for us as humans to lose them. But please I beg you DO NOT LEAVE THEM."

A woman called Jessi Dietrich from Tennessee tweeted about an interaction that she'd had with her vet when asking him about what he found most difficult about his job. "I asked my vet what the hardest part was about his job and he said when he has to put an animal down," she wrote. "90% of owners don't actually want to be in the room when he injects them so the animal's last moments are usually them frantically looking around for their owners and to be honest that broke me."

Dietrich's tweet has resonated with thousands of people around the world, receiving more than 40,000 retweets and 140,000 likes.

What do you do when your dog grows old? When his feet are tired and the pads are worn? When your words of praise are muffled in his ears, and his eyes are milky from their years of use? When his face is grizzled and his color isn't as vibrant?

You love him.

You rub the feet that dutifully carried him by your side.

You speak your praises more loudly, so everybody else can hear the words that he can't.

You guide him the way he has guided you, and prevent him from getting lost as you were before he came along.

You kiss his muzzle and admire the wisdom that has beset him in his later years.

And when it comes time to put him to his final rest, knowing that an irreplaceable part of your heart will follow him, you will do so knowing that you loved him.

And he loved you more.



CONTACT INFORMATION LINKS

Do not "reply" to this bulletin

Choose an appropriate contact below.

Click to request assistance for a [dog needing rescue.](#)

Click to complete [adoption application](#)

Click to [volunteer](#) with Havanese Rescue.

Click if you have a [question or suggestion](#) for this newsletter.

Newsletter Staff

Editor - Joan Ambrose, Past President

Production - Jen Jablonski, President

STAY CONNECTED

