Book Review: Active Years for Your Aging Dog

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Aging is a normal physiological process that need not be accompanied by illness and suffering. This idea is pointed out by veterinarian Bernard S. Hershhorn in his book, *Active Years for Your Aging Dog*, written especially for the concerned owner of an aged, middle-aged, or even a young dog. This book helps the owner to understand the gradual aging process and how to better help his or her dog deal with aging.

Part I of this three part book outlines the normal aging changes in a healthy dog and the characteristics to watch for. The author lists what the owner can do to improve his dog's physical condition which will probably help the dog to live longer. Included is a discussion of exercise, proper nutrition, grooming, obesity, immunization, and annual examination by a veterinarian.

Information on how to tell if your mature dog is sick is of help to both the owner and veterinarian as it provides the owner an understanding of the particular condition of the dog. It outlines when a visit to the veterinarian is necessary and when it is not, how to give the veterinarian a good history, what happens if hospitalization and surgery is necessary, and the do's and don't's of medication. It also gives practical procedures on how to pill a dog or give liquid medication, as well as how to apply eye medications, common procedures an owner must often perform at home.

Part II deals with specific diseases and disorders which are commonly seen in aging dogs. As the author points out, this book is not a text on the diagnosis and treatment of canine disorders and should never be used as such. But it is very helpful to the concerned owner as it lists signs and symptoms seen in most dogs developing a specific disease. Dr. Hershhorn further states that only the family veterinarian who examines the dog can accurately diagnose and prescribe a course of therapy—this book cannot.

Disorders of the skin, eyes, and various systems including vascular, respiratory, urinary, metabolic, nervous and musculoskeletal system are discussed. The normal function of each system is first explained and the causes and symptoms of each disease state are then related. Various treatment procedures are presented along with actual case histories to illustrate both the disease and recovery process.

Throughout this section the author stresses the owner's role in his or her pet's health and what can be done to insure that the dog remains healthy and active throughout its mature years, emphasizing the importance of preventative veterinary medicine. A section on cancer and cancer therapy is included which outlines the various causes of cancer and treatments currently used.

Part III deals with what an owner can do when death finally does come. The author discusses natural death and euthanasia, along with criteria to help one to decide when to stop treatment, as well as disposal, cremation, or burial of the body. In his postscript, Dr. Hershhorn discusses getting another canine companion and points out the initial steps to follow to insure that it also has an active and healthful life.

The appendix contains tables dealing with emergency situations, nutritional requirements, and normal physiological values. A glossary of anatomical, disease, and therapeutic terms is provided, as well as an index for easy reference when a question arises.

The book is very enjoyable reading and is aimed at providing the owner with an understanding of the aging process and specific diseases associated with old age. Dr. Hershhorn’s numerous personal accounts make the book very interesting and informative, pointing out the fact that with proper care and attention to health needs, the mature dog can enjoy a long, happy, and active life.