



River City
VETERINARY
HOSPITAL

Home Modifications for Senior Dogs

Blocking Off Stairways

Your pet's stability may not be at a level where we can trust them to navigate up or down stairs without assistance. It is safer to block stairs so they don't try to take the stairs without help. Step through baby gates are easiest for this, so people can still use the stairs.

Rugs & Yoga Mats

Laminate, wood, and tile flooring are slippery on unstable legs, and it is often difficult for pets to walk on them with confidence and comfort. Runner type rugs with rubber grip on the underside and yoga mats can provide traction through rooms with these types of flooring. Position them close together in paths throughout the house, to favorite places to relax, and to important places like the door to the outside and food/water bowls. Long rolls of yoga mats are available online and can be cut to fit your space.

Furniture Stairs & Ramps

Many pets love to spend time on the furniture or in car rides with their family, but jumping up and down can be difficult. As their mobility declines, they often need to climb rather than jump to get to their favorite places. Commercial pet stairs and ramps can be found online or at pet stores. Using solid footstools, homemade ramps with good traction, or strategically positioned furniture of various sizes can also help pets get where they want to be. A recliner footrest partially elevated could be used as a ramp as well. We may need to teach our pets to use these options, encouraging them to try them with delicious treats up and down multiple times. Leaving them out for several weeks gives them time to try them on their own time. An old dog can learn a new trick, it just takes more time!

If stairs in and out of the house give your pet trouble, a ramp can help them have a more gradual walk up and down. Ramps are available in pet stores or online, but can also be built using wood or other sturdy material. It is important that the surface is not slippery. Anti-slip tape can be adhered to stairs or ramps to help with grip.

Elevating Bowls

Many animals struggle to stand in a bent over position to eat and drink. Raise food and water bowls to a level so your pet can walk up to the bowls without reaching up or down. Be sure there is non-slip flooring at the food and water bowls. Position the bowls in the best place in the house for your pet to have easy access to them, and consider having multiple water bowls so your pet doesn't have to go far to get a drink.

Devices

It is disheartening to both ourselves and our pets when they struggle to get up and down. There are many assistive devices available to help us give them a boost when they need it such as getting up from laying down, going up or down stairs, and getting in and out of the car. *Links to the products mentioned below can be found at the end of this article!*

- **Slings** are temporary aids that are placed under a pet's belly or chest to help lift them up. **GingerLead** is one brand, or in a pinch, a towel could be used.
- **Harnesses** are worn for longer periods of time so they are already in position when they're needed. **Help'Em Up Harnesses** have front and back leg parts with handles on both ends, and they attach together in the middle to keep the back end from sliding down.
 - Make sure the harness fits properly and monitor the skin closely, especially in the creases, for pinching or rubbing spots.
- **Carts/wheelchairs** are primarily used with animals that have lost significant function of several legs, or are paralyzed. They can be made at home or are available online. **Eddie's Wheels** or **K9 Carts** are two possible sources. Proper fit is very important if this type of aid is needed.
- **Wagons** are anything that helps your pet get out and enjoy the neighborhood and life. It could be a kid's wagon your pet rides in or an enclosed pet stroller. Tools like this help your pet enjoy walks again, even if they can't actually walk themselves. They come in all sizes, shapes, and needs and are available online from a variety of vendors. Be sure you pick something that is the right size and stability for your pet and that there is comfortable padding like foam, blankets, or a mattress topper on the inside.

Feet-Traction Options

These can be very helpful for pets with legs that slide out or need extra stability. Please take into consideration that your pet may try to lick or try to eat these products, which should be discouraged or discontinued if your pet is not comfortable. Anything that is really rough has the potential to be scratchy on your floors so use with caution.

- **Dr. Buzby's Toe Grips** are claw covers. They are placed on trimmed claws, near the edge of the claw, and are often glued into place with skin/super glue to improve longevity. They come in different sizes based on the size of the claws/pet.
- **Loobani Foot Pads** are adhesive pads that stick to the pads of your pet's feet and provide traction similar to grip tape that's used on stairs. They come in different sizes based on the size of the foot/pads.
- **Pawtology PawFriction Kit** is a system where fine granules are glued to the bottoms of the pads. The kit comes with the glue and the granules and is best applied with the pet laying down.

Trimming Nails

It can also be difficult for our pets to walk when their claws get long. It is important to stay on top of trimming claws, every 6-8 weeks if possible. If you struggle to trim claws at home, take your pet to a groomer or have a groomer come to your home to ensure they stay short. Pampered Paws Mobile Peticures is one local company that can help at home, but there are other mobile groomers you can find online.

Bedding

Comfortable bedding is extremely important as many of our pets spend much of their day resting. Having multiple beds around the house helps them relax and still be able to spend time with us. Consider using different types of beds and allow them to choose their preference. Sometimes a warm thick bed is best, but other times thick beds may be a tripping hazard. Sometimes a memory foam mat may be preferred (Costco usually has some). Sometimes a cooling bed or a heated blanket may be their favorite. Sometimes they chose the cool floor right next to the lovely bed that's provided. Either way, have bedding available that will help protect bony prominences and provide as much comfort as they're willing to accept.

Play Time

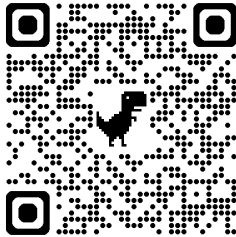
Dogs can be less active in their aging years, but exercise and social time is very important to them. They may not pounce and play like a puppy, but some dogs can still “fetch” after a rolled ball or carry around a favorite toy. Walks may not be as long or as fast as they used to be, but getting out to smell the neighborhood is great for their body and mind. Some sort of exercise to maintain muscle strength is as important as pain control on longevity in our pets. If your dog is too painful to exercise, you must discuss this with your vet. We can help.

Making time every day for petting or gentle grooming like brushing helps them feel loved. If they resist grooming in certain areas, that may be a sign that they are in pain there, so it would be worth discussing this with their vet. Don't disrupt their rest or force interaction with them, but know they may not ask for attention like they used to and you may need to seek them out for loves.

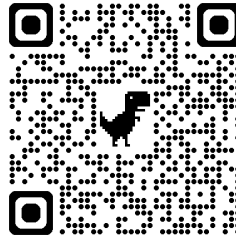
Products Mentioned

Please note that River City Veterinary Hospital has no affiliation with any of the products or services listed below

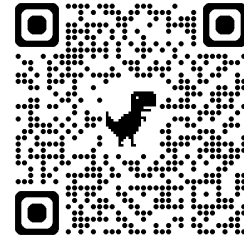
Dr. Buzby's Toe Grips



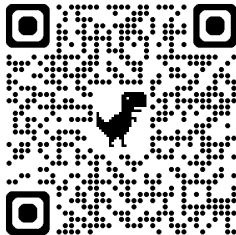
Loobani Toe Grips



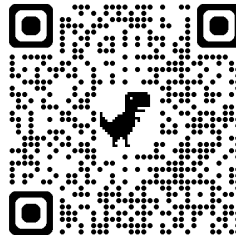
Pawtology PawFriction Kit



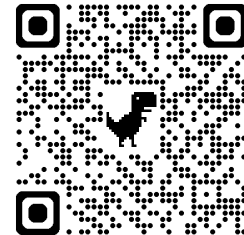
GingerLead Harness



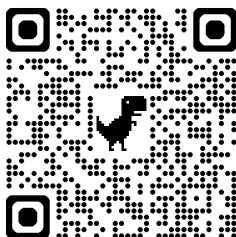
Help 'Em Up Harness



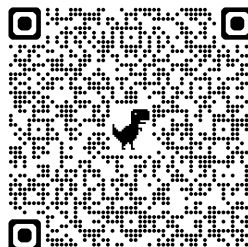
Eddie's Wheels



K9 Carts



Sunshine Yoga Mat Rolls



Pampered Paws Mobile Peticures

