

# COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION

## “Old Dog Syndrome”

Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (CDS) is the *age-related deterioration of cognitive abilities* (normal body functioning that is conditioned or remembered) characterized by behavioral changes in dogs that cannot be attributed to general medical conditions such as brain tumors, infection, or organ failure. Recent studies show 48% of dogs 8 years of age and older exhibit at least one clinical sign of this condition.

CDS is *not* “normal aging.” It is related to several pathological changes that may occur in the brain. The progressive, degenerative course of CDS involves a gradual decline of functions that are normally “remembered” sufficient to produce functional disability in the home and/or as a family member.

**DIAGNOSIS.** Recognition of the clinical signs by the owner is usually the first step in diagnosis. Next, the veterinarian must do a comprehensive physical exam and the appropriate laboratory testing to identify medical conditions that may be contributing to the clinical signs.

### SIGNS OF CDS

#### 1. **Disorientation**

- a) Wanders aimlessly
- b) Appears lost or confused in the house or yard
- c) Gets “stuck” in corners or behind furniture
- d) Stares into space or at walls
- e) Has difficulty finding the door
- f) Does not recognize familiar people
- g) Does not respond to verbal cues or name
- h) Appears to forget reason for going outdoors

#### 2. **Abnormal Sleep/Wake Patterns**

- a) Sleeps more in a 24-hour day
- b) Sleeps less during the night
- c) Decrease in activity
- d) Increase in wandering or pacing

#### 3. **Loss Of Housetraining**

- a) Urinates/defecates indoors
- b) Signals less to go outside

#### 4. **Decreased or Altered Response To Family Members**

- a) Solicits less attention
- b) No longer stands for petting (walks away)
- c) Less enthusiastic greeting
- d) No longer greets owners