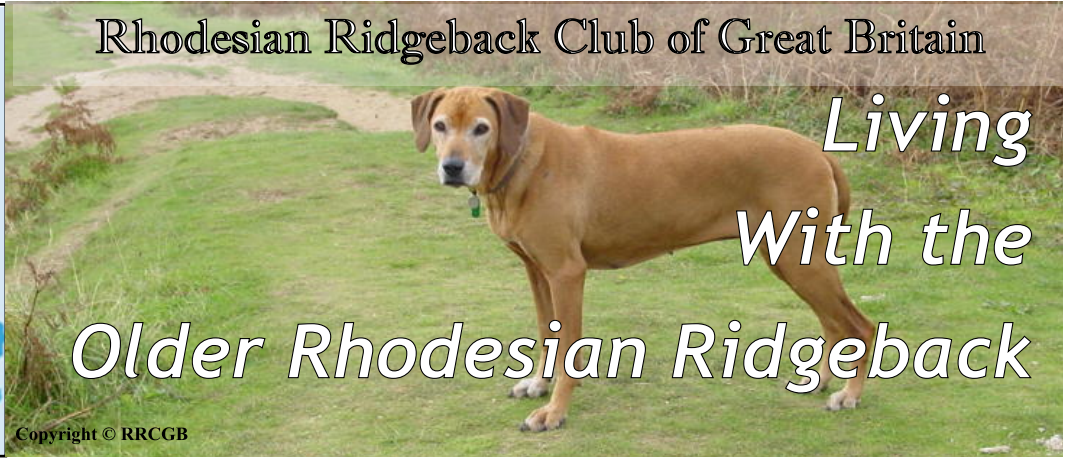




Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of Great Britain



Living With the Older Rhodesian Ridgeback

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Living With The Older Rhodesian Ridgeback

It is to be expected that like people, dogs will slow down with age and the Rhodesian Ridgeback is no exception. To help your dog cope with increasing age you should recognise changes in its appearance and behaviour. Your dog may want to take less exercise and put on weight. Some dogs are more affectionate in old age and become very attached to their owners, whilst others will become grumpier. The older



dog's skin will become less elastic, the coat will lose its shine and to a varying degree white hairs will start to appear.

Eyesight & Hearing

Eyesight and hearing are likely to deteriorate and this might lead to your dog becoming anxious because it will feel vulnerable if in the face of danger. The older

dog's immune system might become less effective and there could be deterioration in internal organs such as the heart, kidneys and liver.

If all this sounds rather depressing it should be borne in mind that improvements in medicine mean that there are drugs available to



alleviate many debilitating effects of old age so with careful and sensible management even older dogs can lead happy and active lives. Around 10 years of age annual visits to the vet should become routine so that any problems can be diagnosed early and suitable treatment commenced.

Exercise

Exercise should become progressively less boisterous, especially in the company of younger dogs. As far as possible the frequency of walks should be maintained as daily exercise helps

to keep muscles in trim and stiffening joints supple but strenuous exercise should be avoided. Walking your dog little and often, for about 20 to 30 minutes, two or three times a day is recommended.



Teeth & Nails

Special attention should be paid to the older dog's nails as they will continue to grow at the usual rate but might need trimming more often. Teeth should be examined more frequently and excess tartar accumulation removed by your vet. As physical activity is reduced, less protein is required but the older dog's basic diet can usually be followed. If the older dog cannot cope with normal sized meals then it might be advisable to reduce the quantities and feed two or

three times a day. Cod liver oil can also be given in small doses to help ease stiff joints in the cold weather. If there are significant changes in your dog's thirst or appetite or a sudden weight loss, consult your vet. Incontinence can become a problem, particularly in older bitches who have been spayed. Control of the bladder deteriorates with age so the exit is not fully closed when it should be and there is a leakage.

Senility

Sometimes elderly dogs get a little senile, forget their house training and wet where they are lying. However, these are not the only cause of wet patches, there are less common bladder disorders which also produce incontinence. In many cases effective treatment is available although medication might have to be given daily.

Senility comes in varying degrees, some easier to cope with than others. Older dogs like to adhere

to a daily routine and can be upset by any significant variation. Deafness and even blindness can be coped with provided there is no change to the normal order of things. Ridgebacks can become very endearing at this stage in their lives when the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Allow them their dignity and never let them suffer because you cannot face making the last fateful decision

of their lives. If one day your partner has passed peacefully away try to remember with gratitude the joy of a full and healthy life. You have been spared the soul searching decision of what to do about your old and ailing companion.

Euthanasia is the most difficult decision you will ever have to

make about your dog but the following guidelines might prove helpful: Is your dog free from pain? Can your dog eat? Does your dog know you? Can your dog move sufficiently for its needs. If you cannot answer 'Yes' to any of these questions then euthanasia might be the only and kindest solution. Most vets are understanding and will attend your residence if you request it, thus allowing your dog to spend its final moments at home and in the company of those it loves most.

