FELINE FORUM

Courtesy of:

Be Ready in Case of Disaster

You can protect your cats during a natural or manmade disaster by being prepared:

- Make arrangements with a family member or neighbor who will take in your cats if you are unable to return home.
- Print or type an "Emergency Care of Companion Animals" card and place it in your wallet. List all of your animals and who should be contacted in case you are injured or hospitalized and cannot return home.
- If you are at home when a disaster happens and you must evacuate, never leave your cats behind! Make arrangements to take them to a family member, a veterinary office, an animal shelter or, ideally, to stay with you.
- Make sure your cats are microchipped or are wearing a collar and tag with your name and phone number.
- Have a supply of your cat's food, water, litter, and medication on hand.
- Keep a cat carrier handy (one for each cat or other small animal you have).

So How Old is My Cat, Really?

Cats are individuals and, like people, they experience advancing years in their own unique ways. Many cats begin to encounter age-related physical changes between 7 and 10 years of age, and most do so by the time they are 12.

The commonly held belief that every "cat year" is worth seven "human years" is not entirely accurate.

In reality, a one-year-old cat is physiologically similar to a 16-year-old human, and a two-year-old cat is like a person of 21. For every year thereafter, each cat year is worth about four human years.

Using this formula, a 10-year-old cat is similar age wise to a 53-year-old person, a 12-year-old cat to a 61-year-old person, and a 15-year-old cat to a person of 73.

How Does My Veterinarian Decide What's Wrong?

The approach to a health problem is based on training, experience, and probability. Some health problems are common, others are rare. Some occur more commonly in young animals, while others are more common in aged pets. Some problems are common in one part of the country, but rarely occur in other locations.

After getting a history of your cat's problem and doing an exam, your veterinarian goes through a mental or written process of listing all the problems identified. She then decides which organ(s) and disease(s) may be causing the problems. and narrows down the lists based on the age, breed, sex, and travel history of your pet.

Tests will be recommended to determine which organ(s) and disease(s) may be responsible for your pet's problem(s). The tests are often recommended in stages, beginning with screening tests that are relatively inexpensive and have little potential for causing harm to the animal. Based on the results more sophisticated tests, which often cost more and may have some risks, may be recommended.

Although your veterinarian cannot predict what will be found on a specific test, usually she will provide some possible outcomes for each of the tests so that you can decide whether the costs and risks are worth the information that may be gained.

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