

Fountain of Youth

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Ponce De Leon spent the better part of a lifetime searching for it, to no avail. Baby boomers spend millions trying to regain it, and usually fail. Now we're not talking about the lean muscle mass we once had, or the wrinkle-free face we possessed many sunbathers ago. This article pertains to the aging greyhound and a condition known as cognitive dysfunction syndrome (CDS), or what we used to call senility.

CDS is an age-related deterioration of cognitive abilities characterized by behavioral changes not associated with other known medical conditions such as diabetes, cancer, or liver disease. CDS is characterized by many behavioral changes: confusion or disorientation, decreased activity level, abnormal sleep-wake cycles, loss of housetraining, decreased responsiveness to owners' commands, and decreased reaction to the owner in general (such as greetings).

We all know there is no magical potion for aging. Certainly there are lots of marketing ploys and infomercials that take dead aim on those of us who have, of late, become increasingly aware of our aging minds and bodies, but most of these are gimmicks and rarely make a difference. Here's where our beloved greyhounds have one up on us. There does happen to be a very useful drug on the market for CDS in dogs. Known as Anipryl (chemical name selegeline), it is manufactured by Zoetis. The original developmental work was done on humans for Parkinson's disease.

Results can be observed in some animals within a week, but may take up to a month. Many dogs show an increased appetite and just seem to snap out of their fog almost overnight. They may continue to show improvement up to three months after the initial therapy is initiated. I recommend dosing once daily, preferably in the morning. Anipryl should not be used with Clomicalm, Mitaban, a Preventic collar, or any other anti-depressants. Very few adverse symptoms have been observed by yours truly. Digestive upsets are the most commonly seen, with vomiting more frequent than diarrhea.

I've lived with a CDS dog; my 13-year-old acts like a 9-year-old now and is doing things I haven't seen in years. Many others have had similar results. It appears, at least at this time, that greyhounds may respond better to this medication than many other breeds.

Once started, Anipryl is a lifetime medication. It should be reserved for a time when CDS is more than a borderline problem. Veterinarians have a CDS survey form that owners can fill out with every visit so that animals can be evaluated as to their status and readiness for this medication. If you ever suspect your aging pet has developed CDS, it's always wise to rule out other conditions with appropriate blood work. If the condition is confirmed by ruling out all other possibilities, what have you got to lose by trying this medication?