

NON-SPORTING GROUP

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[Tibetan Spaniel Club of America](#)

Tibetan Terriers

AGING WELL TOGETHER

One of the remarkable traits the Tibetan Terrier possesses is the potential to age gracefully. It is not unusual for a 12- or 13-year-old to be mistaken for a much younger dog. In fact, this year's Best of Breed winner at the Tibetan Terrier Club of America national specialty was a female veteran, almost 9 years old, Cedar Creek No Rhyme or Reason.

Perhaps graceful aging can be credited to an ancient lineage and devoted breeders who actively work to prevent some of the issues that occur in more popular breeds. The TT is a moderate dog with versatile capabilities that remains relatively free of the joint and aging issues that plague many breeds. However, while good breeding and genetics is part of the equation for successful aging, the environment a TT inhabits has significant impact on those genetics. Just like aging in humans, aging well for canines can be enhanced by optimizing at least three crucial environmental aspects.

Diet. Remember when it was advised to feed the same brand of kibble daily? New studies



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reveal that bacterial diversity of the gut biome is key to overall health and immunity. Fresh whole foods are now recommended to incorporate into a dog's diet. Eating a wide variety of minimally processed foods that are of

canine ancestral origin is now seen as best balanced nutrition. And while augmenting a diet with whole foods is easy, there are multiple manufacturers of organic raw foods available that only need rehydration. What many consider inevitable effects of aging is often due to a poor diet, and thankfully can be reversed. When nutritional needs are met, a strong immune system can heal and repair itself effectively. Gone are the days when introducing a new food to a dog on a limited diet causes an upset stomach. If exposed to a wide variety of foods, the gut develops a diverse, probiotic-rich digestive biome that protects from inflammation, allergies, runny eyes, itchy skin, and so on.

Exercise. It's a given that various kinds of exercise is essential to aging well. Often overlooked, however, is that physical fitness correlates with mental well-being. Like humans, dogs are designed to move! Rigorous movement is the way the lymphatic system drains toxins from the body. It is great to run, walk, and play with our dogs, but our four-legged companions also crave opportunities to expend their energy in uniquely canine activity. While the ancient Greeks theorized all sport was merely preparation for war, so too, when dogs engage in intense physical play, their preference is often an instinctive game that mimics primal prey drive. Providing an

outlet for this energy is often why two dogs can be easier to exercise than one!

Shared walks with our dogs is mutually beneficial. But while our TTs happily accompany their people on a walk, their definition of a great walk might differ from ours. Think about the kind of walk you would experience if you were blindfolded. You'd miss being able to see flowers, butterflies, or the bird that was singing. A dog's sense of smell is its dominant modality of processing information, so it's much appreciated by a TT to be given opportunity to pull over to investigate and derive mental stimulation from the "historical markers" scented along a walk.

Positive Outlook. There is a distinct joyful breath TTs make when they are brimming with happiness and vigor, seeking to engage in play. It can also be imitated by a human to get play started, sort of a breathy, staccato *heh-heh-heh*. But be prepared for a boisterous response! Positive emotions trigger the ventral striatum in the brain. The more it is activated, stress levels are lowered and the greater the sense of well-being. Make sure to experience this wonderful energy with your TT every day! Because life is more about living well than living long.

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