Cats’ health needs change as they get older, but unlike aging humans, they can’t vocalize complaints about aching bones and stiff joints. It is important for cat owners to exercise extra vigilance when it comes to caring for an aging cat.

Follow these tips to help your feline friend age gracefully:

• **Stay current on vital vaccinations.** As a cat grows older, it is essential to keep Cat Flu and Feline Infectious Enteritis in check. Though sometimes tempting to overlook, an older cat has a less efficient immune system and is thus more susceptible to disease. Most older cats will only require booster shots. However, if no vaccinations are on record for a cat, or if you are unsure, you can begin vaccinations at any age.

  Vaccinations can be found for Cat Flu, Enteritis, FeLV, Chlamydia, FIP and Rabies in most areas. Consult your veterinarian for specific details.

• **Don’t hold your breath on oral health care.** According to the American Veterinary Dental Society, 70 percent of cats have some form of oral disease by age three – by age 10, it’s safe to presume that cats’ mouths can be rife with infection.

  At-home oral care programs are ideal to help address the daily oral hygiene needs of cats. According to most veterinarians, brushing cats’ teeth on a regular basis is the best action to take to promote good oral health. For cats that are a little more temperamental about pet owners or vets touching their teeth, a simple and effective solution can be found using a new type of probiotics, called Teddy’s Pride Oral Care, that have been designed specifically for the oral care needs of cats and dogs (www.MyTeddy’sPride.com). These probiotics can be used in addition to brushing or as a standalone oral care routine.

• **Eliminate pesky parasites.** Fleas are the most common skin parasite of cats, leaving many cats with an itchy reaction. To prevent flea bites, use a flea spray or flea powder specifically formulated for cats. Internal parasites, like tapeworms and roundworms, distress older cats, particularly those which go outdoors. Most vets recommend that cats be treated for worms every three to six months – indoor-only cats may have a longer lapses between treatments. Always check with your vet for the best possible treatment program.