



MEDIA RELEASE

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Old dogs can learn new tricks with the right diet

New research from Purina PetCare shows that senior dogs suffering from the effects of old age can regain some of their youthful energy and mental functioning with the right diet.

The study by Purina's product technology centre in the US monitored senior dogs that were fed a diet containing proteins called cytokines, found in certain types of botanical oils.

Dr Jill Cline, an Animal Research Scientist and Senior Nutritionist for Purina PetCare, says that the senior dogs that ate the formula containing the cytokines showed significant improvement within two weeks.

"The senior dogs were literally up to their old tricks. Their cognitive performance and ability were better, their memories were improved and some of the dogs even learned new tricks," says Dr Cline.

Dr Cline is in New Zealand this week for a series of presentations to veterinarians and universities discussing the breakthrough research.

"It is a heartbreaking thing for dog owners to see their beloved pet, with whom they have shared so much over the years, show signs of memory loss and personality change," says Dr Cline.

Dr Cline says that nearly half of the dogs in America are over age six, and a third of their owners report behaviour in their dog that clearly shows the dogs' diminishing mental functioning.

"Owners of senior dogs may start to notice their dog having trouble getting around the house, such as navigating stairs or around furniture, and forgetting such things as where their water bowl is, or how to go outside for toileting.

"The dog might also stare at a wall for minutes on end or press their head against it, or spend all day sleeping and not greet their owner like they used to.

"But what if we could help our older dogs remember the things that they knew when they were young, regain their interest in their surroundings and remember things they have been trained to do?"

Dr Cline says that as dogs age, their bodies become less efficient at processing energy and so don't deliver the nutrients that they need for proper brain function.

"The cytokine protein targets brain neurons, effectively providing them with an alternate energy source that helps the dog's brain function more like when they were younger, delaying the decline of brain function."

Dr Cline says that a new pet food product based on the research will be released in New Zealand before the end of 2009.

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About Nestlé Purina New Zealand

- For over eighty years Purina has been a leader in the advancement of pet care and pet nutrition.
- Purina's expert nutritionists, food scientists, vets, and animal behaviorists are constantly discovering new ways to help pets lead healthier, happier, longer lives.
- No one invests more in research and development, and as a result Purina has made more breakthroughs in the field than any other company.
- Today Purina is one of the world's leading pet care companies, producing some of the best known pet food brands; many of which have served pet owners for generations. Each is the result of the very latest advances in quality, taste and nutrition.
- Purina products are designed to give pets and their owners the best possible choice of recipes and formats, for every life stage and lifestyle.
- Purina is also a committed member of the wider pet care community, supporting charitable organisations, working closely with the communities in which we work and operate, and promoting responsible pet ownership in New Zealand and worldwide.
- With over seventy per cent of New Zealand households owning pets, Nestlé Purina is servicing a growing market.
- Throughout the company's long history in the pet care business, it has built strong brands such as TUX, FRISKIES and FANCY FEAST.
- In 2002 the company acquired Ralston Purina, which saw the introduction of brands such as Purina ONE, BENEFUL and PRO PLAN.