

# The Herb That Helps Pets Age with Grace

This well-loved Ayurvedic herb offers benefits for your senior animal companions, contributing to their graceful, vibrant aging. Have you tried giving it to your pet?

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Ashwagandha is a time-honored Ayurvedic herb that helps your senior dog or cat manage stress, inflammation, and fatigue while supporting energy, cognitive sharpness, and physical resilience
- Clinical research shows ashwagandha reduces cortisol, supports antioxidant defense, regulates immune function, and promotes liver, kidney, and gut health in aging pets
- Ashwagandha helps regulate cortisol, easing anxiety and behavioral stress responses in senior animals without sedatives or side effects, as proven in placebo-controlled animal trials
- By boosting beneficial metabolites like short-chain fatty acids, ashwagandha enhances digestion, stool quality, and intestinal health while maintaining microbiome balance in older pets
- Ashwagandha root extract is gentle, palatable, and clinically safe for long-term use in dogs, making it a valuable addition to your senior pet's wellness regimen

As your beloved furry buddy progresses into their senior years, it's important for you to seek gentle, effective, and evidence-based ways to preserve your pet's quality of life. Aging brings with it an increased susceptibility to stress, joint stiffness, weakened immunity, and cognitive decline.

To address these multifaceted changes, many pet parents are turning to time-tested botanical remedies with modern scientific backing. One such herb that is garnering widespread interest among veterinarians and holistic practitioners alike is Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*).

A revered adaptogenic herb in Ayurvedic medicine, ashwagandha is demonstrating significant promise in supporting aging pets — physically, emotionally, and mentally. Recent veterinary research shows that the root extract can help senior pets by improving their ability to handle stress, supporting brain function, reducing inflammation, and even promoting better digestion.

## Ashwagandha Is a Botanical Aid for Your Senior Pets

Ashwagandha is a small woody shrub native to India and some parts of Africa and the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> Its root has long been valued for its adaptogenic properties, which means it helps the body adjust and cope with physical, emotional, and environmental stressors.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, modern science has begun to validate many of the traditional claims made about this remarkable herb.

Importantly, researchers have now begun studying its effects on companion animals, particularly those in their senior years. As your pets age, they undergo numerous physiological changes that manifest in several ways, such as:

- Decreased energy and stamina
- Greater sensitivity to stress and environmental changes
- Digestive disturbances and reduced nutrient absorption
- Joint stiffness and decreased mobility
- Cognitive dysfunction, including confusion or restlessness
- Lowered immune response and increased vulnerability to infections

Although part of the normal aging process, these changes can diminish their quality of life. Preventive care, including proper nutrition, regular exercise, emotional support, and targeted supplementation, can make a profound difference in how pets experience their golden years. And turning to supportive remedies like Ashwagandha is one of the beneficial strategies you can consider.

## Ashwagandha Calms Stress and Anxiety in Dogs

One of the most consistent findings in Ashwagandha research is its ability to help reduce stress. Chronic stress raises cortisol levels, the body's primary stress hormone. Having elevated cortisol levels for prolonged periods can contribute to anxiety, poor sleep, a weakened immune system, and behavioral changes.

Ashwagandha helps manage cortisol in animals, as shown by a study published in the Journal of Veterinary Behavior. In a four-week clinical trial conducted with 24 dogs experiencing stress-related behavior, those who received 15 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) of Ashwagandha root extract exhibited a statistically significant reduction in urine cortisol to creatinine ratio, which is a marker of stress in dogs. Moreover, these dogs showed measurable improvements in anxiety and pain-related behavior scales, with no adverse side effects reported.

For aging pets, whose stress thresholds may be lower due to sensory decline, joint discomfort, or cognitive changes, this gentle calming effect can enhance their comfort and emotional well-being.<sup>3</sup>

## It Provides Antioxidant Protection and Supports Cellular Health

Aging causes your pet's body to produce more free radicals, which are unstable molecules that can damage cells and accelerate aging. The result is a state known as oxidative stress, which contributes to a host of age-related diseases, including arthritis, cognitive decline, and cardiovascular issues.

Published in the Veterinary Medicine and Science journal, a rigorous double-blind, placebo-controlled study found that senior dogs (aged 8 years old) given Ashwagandha root extract (ARE) showed marked increases in key antioxidant enzymes, including:

- Superoxide Dismutase (SOD)
- Catalase
- Glutathione (GSH)

These enzymes help neutralize free radicals and protect the body's cells from oxidative damage. Notably, the study also found a significant reduction in malondialdehyde (MDA), a marker of lipid peroxidation and oxidative stress. These findings confirm Ashwagandha's role as a powerful antioxidant supplement capable of protecting against age-related cellular wear and tear. According to the researchers:

*"[T]he findings of this study suggest that ARE has adaptogenic properties in healthy geriatric dogs by improving haematological and biochemical profiles, enhancing antioxidant defence, reducing stress and modulating inflammatory responses."*<sup>4</sup>

## Ashwagandha Regulates the Immune System and Has Anti-Inflammatory Effects

Inflammation is a common underlying factor in many age-related disorders, from joint pain to chronic fatigue. With aging, the immune system also begins to function less efficiently, a process known as immunosenescence. This can lead to chronic low-grade inflammation, increased susceptibility to illness, and slower recovery from injury.

The study found that ashwagandha has potent immunomodulatory and anti-inflammatory effects in clinical studies with dogs. Supplementing with this extract led to:

- **Decreased levels of inflammatory cytokines**, such as interferon gamma (IFN- $\gamma$ ) and tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF- $\alpha$ )
- **Lower levels of interleukin-10 (IL-10)**, an immune signaling molecule often elevated in chronic inflammation
- **Reduced activation of NF $\kappa$ B**, a key transcription factor involved in promoting inflammation

These outcomes suggest that Ashwagandha may help regulate the immune response in a way that supports better health and reduced inflammation in aging pets.<sup>5</sup>

## Enhancing Liver and Kidney Function

Healthy liver and kidney function are essential for aging pets, as these organs are responsible for filtering toxins, supporting digestion, and maintaining metabolic balance. In the same 60-day trial with senior dogs, ashwagandha supplementation led to:

- Lower levels of ALT (alanine aminotransferase) and AST (aspartate aminotransferase), markers of liver stress
- Improved levels of serum protein, albumin, and globulin, all of which are important indicators of liver function and immune health
- Decreased creatinine and blood urea nitrogen (BUN), which reflect improved kidney efficiency

These findings highlight Ashwagandha's potential role in supporting healthy detoxification and organ performance in older animals.

## Ashwagandha Also Promotes Gut Health

The gut plays a vital role in digestion, immune function, and even emotional regulation through what's known as the gut-brain axis. A healthy gut microbiome can influence everything from mood and inflammation to nutrient absorption and bowel regularity.

A recent study published in *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* found that ARE significantly improved several gut-related markers in geriatric dogs. These include:<sup>6</sup>

- **Increased propionic acid and total short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs)** — important compounds that support gut barrier integrity and reduce inflammation
- **Improved fecal scores**, suggesting better stool quality and digestive efficiency
- **Elevated L-citrulline levels**, a marker of intestinal lining health
- **No negative effects on fecal pH or fat content**, demonstrating good digestive tolerance

Together, these changes support a healthier gut environment — an often overlooked but essential aspect of aging well.

## Is Ashwagandha Safe for Pets?

Yes, it is! One of the most compelling reasons to consider Ashwagandha for your aging pet is its proven safety profile. Across multiple controlled studies, this herb's root extract was well tolerated by dogs, even at therapeutic doses administered daily over extended periods.

These studies also found no adverse reactions or toxicity, no negative effects on the blood or organs, and high compliance with the study due to its neutral taste and ease of administration with food.

If you are considering incorporating Ashwagandha into your pet's wellness plan, here are some key recommendations:

1. **Consult with your veterinarian** first, especially if your pet is on medications or has existing health conditions.
2. **Use a product specifically formulated for pets** — Use one that's ideally clinically studied, like KSM-66.
3. **Follow dosing guidelines carefully** — Most studies used 15 mg/kg of body weight per day.
4. **Introduce it slowly** — Observe your pet for changes in mood, digestion, energy, and mobility.
5. **Pair with a healthy lifestyle**, including proper diet, exercise, and regular veterinary checkups for optimal results.

## Supporting Your Pet's Graceful Aging, Naturally

In an age where more pet owners are seeking natural, holistic approaches to pet wellness, Ashwagandha stands out as a scientifically validated, well-tolerated botanical that offers real benefits for aging pets. Whether your goal is to support stress resilience, cognitive clarity, immune strength, joint comfort, or digestive balance, this ancient herb offers a broad-spectrum solution rooted in both tradition and modern veterinary science.

By incorporating Ashwagandha into your senior pet's daily routine, you may help them not only live longer but live more fully, with grace, vitality, and the joy they so richly deserve.

Sources and References

<sup>1</sup> [Cleveland Clinic, July 31, 2025](#)  
<sup>2</sup> [Animal Wellness Magazine, July 4, 2025](#)  
<sup>3</sup> [Journal of Veterinary Behavior Volume 51, May 2022, Pages 8-15](#)  
<sup>4,5</sup> [Veterinary Medicine and Science, Volume 10, Issue 5, September 2024, e1556](#)  
<sup>6</sup> [Front. Vet. Sci., 22 January 2025, Sec. Veterinary Pharmacology and Toxicology, Volume 11 – 2024](#)

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