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## Tips for Old Dogs on Slick Floors

-Dr. Jacky May

Many older dogs, for a variety of reasons, have less control of their rear legs than when they were younger. This loss of control creates significant issues for their mobility, especially on slick floor surfaces. One of the most common reasons to have to make end of life decisions for medium to large breed dogs is the loss of mobility. Managing the floor surface for them can make a big difference in how well and how long your elderly dog can keep getting around on their own.

Slick surfaces make it far too easy for dogs that have nerve dysfunction of any sort to slip and fall while walking. Slick surfaces also make it difficult to impossible for those same dogs or those suffering from arthritis to get the traction they need to push up to stand from sitting or lying down.

### Some suggestions for managing the floor surface for your geriatric dogs:

1) If you have some carpeted rooms and some not, then consider using baby gates to keep them away from the rooms with slick flooring so they do not slip, fall, and get trapped struggling to rise in those rooms. There are infinite choices these days in baby gates that are easily opened and shut with one hand to keep it easy for you to get from room to room.

2) Consider using temporary floor coverings. Whether that is a large area rug, or smaller solutions for parts of a room or walkways through the slick floored area. A surprising number of dogs quickly learn to stay on the surfaces with traction, or to use the traction walk way you provide when navigating through a slick floored room. Different things suggested by clients over the years: strips of discarded carpet or area rugs, artificial grass carpet, interlocking squares of lightly padded flooring (such as for kids play areas). Whatever you choose should have nonskid backing so that it can grip the floor since the dogs' feet no longer can properly.

3) Consider a boot made to have decent traction if your dog will be cooperative and wear such. There are numerous such boots made commercially, but below is an article by one of our clients, Rita Humphrey describing how she made a very functional pair for her own dog.

Rita Humphrey's simple homemade traction booties :



*"Shany's boots help him to walk on the laminate floors in our home. He suffers from a disease that has weakened his back and hips and causes his legs to splay when he walks on the shiny floors. I figured if he had some traction he might be able to walk a little straighter.*

*I took a pair of baby booties, purchased for a dollar at Dollar Tree, and glued a piece of soft rubber cut from a larger piece of non-slip rug backing. I simply cut a length to fit the underside of the bootie and glued it on with a hot glue gun. I let the glue dry for about a half hour, slipped them on, secured them*

*with half a shoe lace on each, being careful not to tie too tight so as to cut off circulation, and stood him up.*

*I tried some harder plastic material first, but he did not like walking on it. This conforms to his foot and is a soft for him to walk on as well as providing him the traction he needs on the slick floor.*

*He hesitated for a few seconds and tried walking and it worked! It's not perfect but it does give him more traction and, hopefully, keeps him more comfortable. The best part is that they are quickly washed and dry in no time, especially, drying out on the picnic table in this heat."*

-Rita Humphrey

