

What a Pain!

A common comment in the consulting room goes along the following lines; 'although that looks nasty he doesn't seem to be in pain!' For instance a cat with a mouthful of infected wobbly teeth with holes in does not seem to be in pain as it is still eating and walking around and not, like us, lying on the couch moaning and crying! A dog with a broken leg can be running around on three legs and still be eating and wagging its tail. However other dogs with such an injury may show more signs of what we describe as pain; howling, crying etc. So how pain is shown varies with the individual. Does this mean that some of our pets don't feel pain? No, of course not, they just show it, and put up with it, in a different way to us humans. It is thought that wild animals are picked on by the rest of their group if they show signs of weakness so it is in their nature not to show signs of pain. Also they are more at risk of being killed by predators if they are slower or weaker so again they will try and cover up any signs of pain.



So how do we know if our pet is in pain? What symptoms does it display? Cats in pain 'may';

- [Stop interacting with people
- [Stop eating and/or drinking
- [Sit very still, and seem hunched or tense
- [Not lie on their sides or stretch
- [Not groom
- [Show temperament changes
- [Bite, rub or chew an injury
- [Less commonly, show aggression, vocalisation and inability to settle

Cats with long term (chronic) pain are more difficult to spot and are often just assumed to be 'old'. These cats may be less active, jump less or not so far, and be unwilling to go out.

What about in dogs? Most dogs that are experiencing pain will change their behaviour patterns. We will see them reluctantly climb stairs, observe them becoming more withdrawn and inactive, or notice them reacting negatively to being held or picked up. These subtle changes in behaviour may be our only clue that the dog is hurting. Back pain is common in mature dogs and anyone who has witnessed an older dog struggle to get up or even refuse to stand after lying down knows the discomfort these arthritic dogs must endure. Look for these or other similar yet subtle behavioural changes, as they may be the only way your dog communicates a need for help.

Much can be done nowadays if your pet is showing signs of pain. If it has been injured then there are many drugs that can be administered by your Veterinary Surgeon to help alleviate the symptoms while the injury is addressed. If your pet is 'old' it is very important not to put any symptoms down to 'old age'! Many of these pets with symptoms as described above are actually suffering long term pain due to problems associated with their age. Many of them can lead a much better quality of life if given long term medication to manage their pain.

So if you are worried your pet is showing any of the symptoms discussed above then make an appointment with your Veterinary Surgeon now. Your pet may be very pleased you did!

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