

September 2021

## Pain Awareness Month

September is Animal Pain Awareness Month. Animals in general are experts at hiding signs of pain and discomfort. Here are some ways to spot if your pet is painful, as well as common pain management practices.

### Signs of Pain

Animals tend not to show pain until they are unable to hide it any longer. Furthermore, some pets are better at hiding pain than others. Common symptoms that you should be on the lookout for include decreased eating, lethargy, whimpering, restlessness, guarding behaviors, urinary/defecation changes, and changes in how your pet stands or walks. Some pets can become more aggressive by either growling, hissing, or biting when a painful area is touched. Others pets over-groom or even chew the affected areas.



### Pain Management

There are several ways to help your pet manage their pain. First, figuring out specific causes of pain and treating the disease (if possible) should be pursued. For example, removing a large mass or an infected tooth will help reduce your pet's discomfort.

However, many pets with arthritis or other chronic diseases may need long-term pain management. One common technique is to treat with joint supplements, like glucosamine or chondroitin, which help with chronic or long-term pain related to arthritis by helping to repair damaged joints and promote healthy joint fluid. If there is more intense pain (such as post-surgery, after an ACL tear, etc.), then prescription pain medications may be the best choice to help relieve pain. However, call your vet before giving medications like aspirin or other over-the-counter pain medications, as these often have a low safety margin and can actually be harmful or toxic to your pet!

Oral medications aren't the only options to help relieve pain in your pet. Cold laser therapy can be used to help increase the production of anti-inflammatory enzymes and reduce overall inflammation. Another option is physical therapy. Physical therapy will help improve the mobility of the affected muscles and joints. Physical therapy can help a pet post-operatively after surgery, with chronic conditions like arthritis, or even reducing stress!

Keeping an eye on your pet for any behavioral changes or physical signs of pain will help you determine when it is time to bring your pet to the vet and to discuss what pain management options might be best!

Best regards,

*Rachel Rielinger, DVM*



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