

Does Your Dog Have Arthritis?



Arthritis is a sneaky condition. It tends to creep up over time and our pets won't always show obvious signs until they are in considerable pain.

The disease is caused by the wearing down of the cartilage that covers the bones at the end of a joint. This 'cushioning' cartilage helps joints move freely and without discomfort but as it wears down, the ends of the bones become exposed and can rub together. You can imagine the pain this might cause your pet!

It is very important to understand that your pet won't necessarily limp, yelp or whimper if he or she is in pain.

Most of the signs of arthritic pain are subtle. Watch out for:

- * Hesitant to jump into the car or up on furniture
- * Slowing down on walks or a reluctance to walk as far
- * A bit slow to get going after getting up
- * Behavioural changes e.g. grumpy when touched on the back
- * Lowers his body slowly when going to lie down
- * Slipping on floorboards or hesitant to use the stairs

Don't be tempted to put these changes down to 'he's just getting old' as your pet may be in significant pain – he just can't tell you!

Cats are THE BEST at Hiding Arthritis!

Cats are even *better* than dogs at hiding or covering up pain caused by arthritis. If you think about it, cats spend much of their time sleeping and we generally don't take cats for a walk, so it's hard to see changes in their mobility.

Try to keep an eye out for these signs:

- * Landing 'in a heap' when jumping off furniture
- * Hesitant when jumping up or down from furniture
- * Reluctant to climb the fence or trees
- * No longer using the litter box correctly (especially if it has high sides)
- * Resistant to being picked up or moved
- * Matted or scruffy coat (as grooming is painful)
- * Long nails – simply because of reduced activity



If you notice any of these signs arrange a check-up with us.

Good pain management can make a huge difference to your cat's quality of life and this is one of the most important things we can do for our pets.

Top Tips for Managing Arthritis

We will work with you to come up with the best management plan to keep your pet pain free. The key to success is a multi-targeted approach as this can help reduce the need for large amounts of medication and lessen the potential side effects of any one treatment.

Things YOU can do:

- * Keep your pet's weight in a healthy range – ask us for recommendations
- * Exercise your pet to keep the joints moving and the muscles toned
- * Think about getting a portable ramp to get your dog in and out of the car
- * Provide an additional piece of furniture so your dog or cat doesn't need to jump so high to get to his favourite spot

Medical treatments might include:

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), Nutraceuticals and Diet modification. **Regular check-ups are important so we can monitor your pet's pain and mobility and adjust the program if necessary.**

Patient of the Month

Guppy



Guppy had a serious problem which she couldn't hide any longer! The challenge was working out why. She wasn't walking normally, couldn't jump up or down properly, was very floppy and struggled to hold her head up. An important part of her history was she had convinced her family to only feed her kangaroo pet mince without any cat food. We ran a complete blood profile and completed a full neurological examination to determine her level of neurological function. This suggested that Guppy had a Thiamine (Vitamin B1) deficiency. Further research by Dr Jenni found that in some rare cases reported by Sydney University, cats fed kangaroo mince developed thiamine deficiency. The preservatives used in pet kangaroo mince contain a thiaminase which destroys thiamine. The awesome news for Guppy was we started vitamin B1 injections, convinced her to eat cat food (easier said than done) and she improved quickly. *She turned back into a naughty kitten, jumping onto the kitchen bench!*