



Recognizing and Addressing Pet Pain

Part of an animal's nature is to hide the pain that they feel. While hiding pain used to serve as a survival mechanism in the wild, it now makes it harder for owners to notice when something is wrong. This month we wanted to discuss what pain is, how to spot it in your pet, and how to manage that pain.

Pain is commonly thought to come from injuries but can also be caused by chronic conditions such as arthritis. According to pain experts, pain can be defined as “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage.” Because pets often hide their pain, it is very difficult to identify and measure, but scientists now believe that animals feel pain similarly to humans. If it causes pain to you, it will cause pain in your pet.

Signs Your Pet May Be in Pain

It can be difficult to identify pain in your pet, but if you pay close attention, many signs may tell you something is wrong. Symptoms of pain include:

- After surgical procedures and obvious injuries
- Avoiding stairs, jumping, and being handled/ picked up
- Decreased activity
- Struggles to stand up, lay down, or get comfortable
- Whimpering or being more vocal than normal
- Limping, stiffness, or moving more slowly than normal

- Changes in personality, such as becoming more anti-social or becoming uncharacteristically aggressive

Treatment Options

Once you have identified that your pet is in pain, multiple treatment options could be utilized to make sure your pet starts feeling better and healing.

A common pain treatment for pets is Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). NSAIDs interrupt the body's production of substances released when cells are damaged. This interruption prevents pain and swelling from occurring in the injury. NSAIDs are used to treat mild to moderate pain and discomfort.

In more extreme cases, such as pain from surgeries, serious injuries, or severe cancer, veterinarians may prescribe other pain relief medication, such as opioids.

It is very important to always call your veterinarian before administering over-the-counter medication or any pain medication left over from other injuries or pets. What works for one pet may not work for another and, in fact, may cause more harm. You should also never give your pet human medication unless explicitly prescribed by your veterinarian.

If you notice any of these signs or think your pet may be experiencing pain, book an appointment, and we can start forming a treatment plan.

Optional Additional Part on Laser Therapy (will only be added for hospitals that are running Q2 laser promo)

Another common form of pain management is Laser Therapy. Laser therapy uses specific wavelengths of light to stimulate electrons, activate tissue healing, and promote cellular growth. Most laser therapy treatments consist of sessions two to five times a week for several weeks, however, chronic issues may be treated less frequently but over a much longer period.

Therapeutic lasers are typically low-level or "cold" lasers as opposed to "hot" lasers, which may be used in surgery.

Laser Therapy is commonly used to help alleviate muscle sprain/ strain, post-operation (helps stimulate healing around the incision), and in situations where pets may experience musculoskeletal pain.