

Managing your pet's pain at home

How to keep your pet comfortable and healthy when they suffer chronic pain.

Winter can be a difficult time for some of our elderly pets for both dogs and cats. Joint pain can arise for pets with arthritis, luxating patellas, hip dysplasia, or after any orthopaedic operation. These can worsen as the days become colder, as joints are stiffened and exercise is limited. In this article, we would like to share some pain management advice that can help your pet stay healthy and comfortable through the cooler months.

OSTEOARTHRITIS

Arthritis is a disease caused by the breakdown of the joint structure due to everyday wear and tear. As part of arthritis, cartilage breaks down and the joint capsule thickens. This

decreases joint function and results in inflammation, pain and lameness. In dogs, arthritis is a common cause

of constant pain. Around **1 in 5 dogs** are affected by arthritis and present with stiffness and/or limping. In fact 80% of dogs over 8 years will have changes on x-rays indicative of arthritis. In cats, lameness is not seen, but is shown through a change in behaviour. Pain can cause cats to play less, sleep more, avoid being handled, have problems with

grooming, urinate around the litter box, experience weight loss and be unwilling to jump.

HIP DYSPLASIA

Hip dysplasia is a disease where the ball and socket joint of the hip doesn't properly align. This most commonly affects larger breeds, such as German Shepherds and Labradors, and can be genetic. The condition usually worsens as they get older, as do luxating patellas.

HOW TO HELP

1. Pain relief Medication: Anti-inflammatory drugs can help to reduce pain in the joints. While it does not solve the problem, it can help to improve your pet's comfort greatly.

2. Protect the cartilage in the joint: Chondroprotective supplements help to maintain healthy cartilage, slow down cartilage breakdown and support the production of joint fluid. These include glucosamine and chondroitin, which are available in oral products. Injectable chondroprotectives are also available for dogs, involving 4 weekly injections here at the vet.

3. Keeping a healthy weight and diet: The heavier the animal, the higher the pressure placed on already painful joints. In dogs

(and cats), it is shown that even a 5-10% weight loss can reduce lameness greatly. Omega 3 fatty acids in a pet's diet has been shown to reduce inflammation in the joints. There are commercial diets available for seniors that include omega 3s, and joint support.

4. Care and exercise: Medically, care can be taken to monitor organ function through blood and urine tests, especially if your pet is on medications long term. At home, placing mats on slippery floors, installing ramps and using well-padded beds can make joint pain more manageable. Safe exercise programs for your pet can be worked out to improve their muscle tone and stamina. A gentle massage or groom when your pet is lying on your lap can also help strengthen muscles and improve coat condition.

If you think that your pet is affected by joint pain, we would love to form a plan with you and conduct a health check. Together with pain relief and simple changes at home, helping your pet enjoy life is achievable and greatly rewarding!



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Glyde is a wonderful supplement to help with joint support.

No Prescription Necessary.