

OSTEOARTHRITIS



& Your Pet



Bring back their *WILD* side





Meeting Your Pet's Needs

Pets are now living increasingly longer. This means we can spend more time enjoying the bonds we have with them as valued members of our family. It also means we have more opportunity in their senior years to ensure they are comfortable.

Osteoarthritis (OA)

This leaflet contains information on recognising the signs of pain, caused by osteoarthritis. If you notice symptoms in how your pet is behaving which may relate to OA, it is important to initially confirm this diagnosis with your veterinarian. They will then provide important advice and treatment decisions when it comes to proactively managing OA and your pet's long term health.

Together, you can bring back their *wild* side!

Symptoms in Dogs

Dogs show pain in many different ways. Often the signs of osteoarthritis develop over a period of time and we might be so accustomed to seeing these behaviours that we accept them as being a normal part of the aging process.

Ask yourself, is your dog:

- Limping?
- Having trouble rising?
- Less active?
- Less tolerant of exercise?
- Detached, irritable, or more dependent than previously?
- Chewing or licking his/her joints?

The signs listed above are common symptoms of arthritis in dogs. Some dogs may display one or more of these symptoms, however many cases of canine arthritis go undetected every year. If you've noticed any of these symptoms, a visit to the vet will be the best gift you give your dog this year.



Understanding Osteoarthritis

How It Affects Your Pet

Osteoarthritis is inflammation of the bones and joints, and results in pain or discomfort. As well as signalling a deterioration of the joint, pain associated with arthritis may:

- Stop your pet doing what they enjoy.
- Interfere with the quality time you spend with your pet.
- Prevent your pet from being active.
- Change the way your pet walks, runs, and bears weight.

Osteoarthritis is a progressive disease. Being proactive about pain will give your pet a better quality of life whilst also helping protect their joints!

How Your Vet Can Help

There are several important areas where your vet can help you help your pet. Your vet can:

- Diagnose the source of your pet's symptoms.
- Provide pain relief to ensure your animal is comfortable.
- Help protect against the progression of disease.
- Give advice on making your house comfortable for your pet – this may involve a soft dog bed, litter trays in accessible places for cats, or ramps for animals that are having trouble jumping to their favourite spots!
- Give advice on rest, exercise and physiotherapy for your pet.
- Help you manage your pet's weight. Often this can be the single most important long term measure you can change.

Symptoms in Cats

Often osteoarthritis in cats is very subtle, as symptoms may be more behavioural than physical, and can be difficult to identify.

Ask yourself, is your cat:

- Reluctant to play or jump?
- Inactive?
- Stiff or limping?
- Irritable?
- Grooming poorly?
- Suffering from swollen joints?

The signs above are common symptoms in arthritic cats. However, as many cats have a sedentary lifestyle, especially when they get older, it may be difficult to spot that they are in pain. If you notice any of these symptoms, a visit to the vet will be the best gift you give your cat this year.





Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs, or NSAIDs, are medications that provide pain relief, anti-inflammatory effect, and protection against deterioration of joints. If your pet is suffering from arthritis, your veterinarian may prescribe NSAIDs to help alleviate your pet's pain.

As with all medications, side effects can occur. If your pet becomes unwell or you suspect your pet is having problems with a medication, STOP the medication and CONTACT your veterinarian.

The most commonly seen side effect of NSAID use is a mild softening of your pet's stools. Loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea, or other gastrointestinal signs may occasionally be observed.

Importance Of The Revisit

To optimise your pet's response whilst minimising the risk of using NSAID medications, it is best to discuss the treatment plan with your veterinarian, to ensure that you know when any revisits or lab tests are needed.

Lifestyle and medication needs may change over time. Your vet will consider the factors that might contribute and change treatment regimes accordingly. This ensures that your pet continues to receive the best care possible.

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