

## Would You Recognize Pain in Your Pet?

Darren Hawks, DVM

I am sure that all of us could identify obvious pain in our animal friends. Like a foxtail in the ear, or noticing a yip when a particular area is touched. But would you recognize more subtle, chronic pain in your pet?

Pets with chronic pain, like from arthritis or digestive problems, don't typically make it obvious. There is no yipping or moaning. And since they can't tell us directly, at least not with words, what do you look for?

Animals in pain might just act "old". As a veterinarian, it's my job to help people as their pets enter the Golden Years. I ask if they think their pet has arthritis. I can't tell you how many people think things are just A-OK, but in the next sentence tell me that their pet has slowed down in the past year- that their pet is just "getting old". Many clients are quite surprised when I tell them that this can be a sign of pain, and that they might not have to just accept that their pet is "getting old".

So as a caring pet parent, what should you be looking for? Well, as I mentioned above, maybe your pet is acting slow, or old, or not involved with the family. Maybe he or she is sleeping a lot more. The eyes aren't as bright, the pet withdrawn. Maybe your pet is grumpier, more prone to snapping or hissing at other pets or even family members.

More specific signs of pain can be a trembling leg, not sleeping well, panting at night, slow or labored when getting up, needing to "warm up". Watch for loss of previous behaviors such as playing, stretching or lying in certain positions, or changing the way he or she sleeps. A pet with arthritis might not jump into the car or up on furniture like they used to, hesitating or even waiting for assistance. An arched back, a tense body, an overall stiffness- these can be signs of discomfort. Even poor appetite and weight loss can be due to pain. A performance dog (or horse!) might lose interest or drive in their sport, even developing some anxiety or disobedience.

So now I ask again, "Is your pet hurting?" If you suspect that your pet might have a problem, see your veterinarian. There are many modalities to help, including body work, chiropractic, acupuncture, cold laser, diet, herbs, and supplements. Suddenly, your pet might enjoy walks with you again. Or they might play with other pets like they did a year ago. Or they come to you more often for attention and interaction. Their face is perkier, and their eyes are brighter. Maybe you can help your pet enjoy life more, and you can share more time, and better quality time, with your friend.

Chiropractic and body work are my favorite part of my practice. It is so gratifying to see a pet's expression change from tense to relaxed, from painful to comfortable. Results are often seen right there in the exam room.

My training in chiropractic was through Options for Animals, and I completed AVCA certification over 15 years ago. Since then, like most practitioners, I have developed my own way of approaching musculoskeletal issues,

using a combination of chiropractic, trigger point work, myofascial release, Integrative Manual Therapy, Reiki, and cold laser. Sometimes, especially in very arthritic or painful pets, a light touch is best.

Why don't you come see me at HawksView Holistic and see what chiropractic and body work might do for your pet? You might be surprised. And your pet might get a lot happier!

Dr. Darren Hawks, DVM

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