

Gilbert St Gossip

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 or yelp or whimper if he is in pain.

Most of the signs of arthritic pain are subtle and here's what you should watch out for if you own a dog (we'll cover cats in more detail below):



- 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 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 is hard to see a change in their mobility.

Try to keep an eye out for these subtle signs:

- Landing 'in a heap' when jumping off furniture
- Hesitant when jumping up or down from the furniture
- Reluctant to climb the fence or trees
- No longer using the litter box properly (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 you should 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!

If we've diagnosed your pet with 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 muscles toned, Think about getting a portable ramp to help your dog in and out of the car, Provide an additional piece of furniture so your dog or cat doesn't have to jump so high to reach his favourite spot.

Medical treatments might include:

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs): these help to reduce pain and inflammation quickly and may be used in the short or even long term.

Disease-modifying drugs: given as a regular injection, these help to relieve pain and help to preserve joint cartilage - ask us for more information.

Nutraceuticals: supplements such as glucosamine and chondroitin may be helpful in improving your pet's joint function and may help slow down the progression of arthritis.

Diet modification: a diet high in essential fatty acids can help reduce inflammation and improve your pet's mobility. Ask us about the specific arthritis prescription diets we have available. **Regular check-ups are important so we can monitor their pain and mobility and adjust the program if necessary.**



Patient of the Month



Oz came into the clinic one afternoon with a sore right back leg. He was limping, reluctant to move and jump, crying in discomfort. He has had hip problems from a young age and sometimes drags the back legs when walking. Given his clinical signs, hips, knee and possibly spine problems were suspected. Oz was given pain relief medication for the weekend and came in the next week for xrays.

The Xrays showed presence of unusual bony structures in both of his knee joints. We suspected that the changes in his knees were most likely due to osteoarthritis. His hips and spine were structurally normal and sound. Oz then started on a cartrophen course to support his joints. Cartrophen is a medication that supports joints by improving the quality of joint fluid and helping cartilage repair. It is done via 4 injections, one week apart. This is because the medication takes that amount of time to accumulate in the blood stream to reach an effective level.

We recommend cartrophen courses for patients with osteoarthritis due to its joint support. Many of our patients have a noticeable improvement on cartrophen, some even want to jump into cars or onto furniture again.