

Arthritis in Pets

Just like humans, as pets get older they can suffer from aches and pains from their joints. Wear and tear of joints is not uncommon, around 20% of dogs and cats suffer from osteoarthritis.



In a normal joint, cartilage covers and protects the ends of bones so when the animal puts weight through a joint, cartilage acts as a shock absorber to cushion the bones and their sensitive nerve endings. In an arthritic joint, the cartilage has deteriorated and wears away faster than it can be replaced, so the bones in the joint may rub against each other. In response to the instability caused by degeneration of soft tissue in and around the joint, the body lays down new bone around the joint in an attempt to stabilise it.

Together, the deterioration of the normal joint cartilage and formation of new bone around the joint cause the animal discomfort and restrict mobility, in turn affecting the animal's quality of life and causing the animal to show symptoms of arthritis.

As you may expect, being very different creatures, cats and dogs tend to show signs of arthritis in different ways and the symptoms are often not as obvious as you may think...

Dogs may often seem to be 'slowing down' or 'getting older', slowing down on or not being as enthusiastic about walks or jumping into the car. Other signs include reluctance to go up stairs, difficulty or slow rising in the morning or after a nap. Often, multiple joints are affected but sometimes dogs can show pain from arthritis by limping on the worst affected.

Cats, unlike dogs, are less likely to show any obvious signs. Owners may notice their cat becoming less active, less willing to jump onto high surfaces or go up stairs. Especially in long haired cats, owners may notice hair matting as the cat is less able to groom themselves. Cats may appear more grumpy or irritable or less tolerant of being stroked.

There are lots of possible options for managing your pet's arthritis, some of which include physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, prescription diets, joint supplements, weight loss and/or exercise modification, acupuncture, and finally medical management with anti-inflammatories.

Every pet is different, so if you are concerned that your pet may be suffering with arthritis, please book a consultation with one of our vets who will be happy to discuss options and find the best one to suit you and your pet. Our lovely nursing team also offer free mobility consultations where they can assist you in finding the best way to support your pet.

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