

Understanding Pain



In Your Cat



Help them get back their *WILD* side



Norbroom[®]



Understanding pain in cats

Our cats feel pain in a similar manner to people but often disguise rather than show any discomfort. We may assume that if something is painful for ourselves it also will be for cats. Common conditions in cats which cause pain include dental disease, urinary tract disease, and osteoarthritis. Assessing pain in cats is complex as individuals have quite a varied tolerance to pain, and responses to painful episodes are often subtle.

As cats cannot communicate with words, it is behavioural changes which provide us with the important clues to recognising they may be in pain. Information provided in this handout will discuss some of these behavioural changes that may indicate pain. If there are concerns about any recent changes in your cat's behaviour, it is important to firstly have them individually examined by your veterinarian.

Meeting your pet's needs

Your veterinarian is best placed to provide advice on the management and treatment for your cat, taking into consideration their general health together with all options available.

Behavioural Indicators of Pain

Indicators of pain

Principally it is any changes in behaviour which may indicate episodes of or adaptations to pain. These changes include both the loss of normal behaviours and the development of new behaviours in response to pain. Alterations in behaviour that occur as your pet ages may be in response to pain, so consider changes in behaviour that you now consider normal.

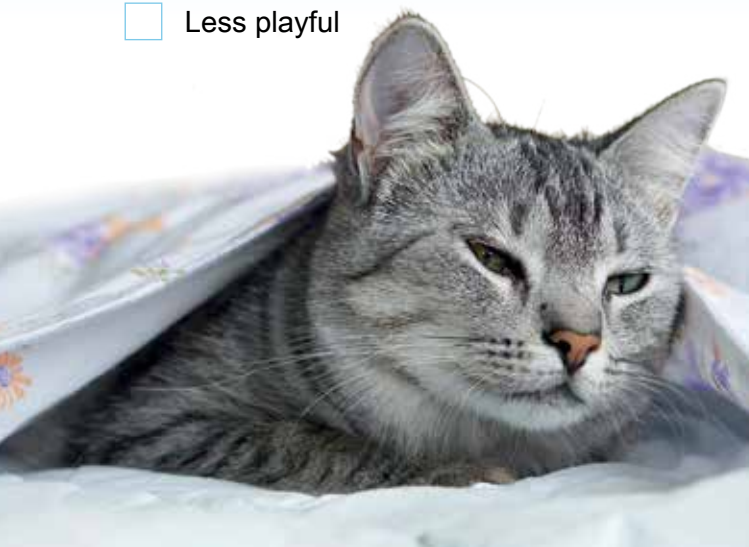
Different noises from your cat may indicate pain and may occur when your pet moves or is handled.

These may include:

- Meowing excessively
- Altered meowing or purring sounds
- Hissing or growling

Activity level:

- Restlessness
- Reluctance to move, or moves slowly or stiffly
- Trembling or shaking when standing
- Less playful





Altered daily routines may indicate pain:

- Hiding in safe places
- Developing a more isolated lifestyle
- Changed sleeping patterns and locations, preferring lower more easily accessible spots.
- Changes in drinking habits
- Difficulty entering the litterbox or squatting to go to the toilet
- Reduced normal routines including grooming habits resulting in a poor or matted coat
- Licking, biting, or over grooming resulting in a skin condition

PLEASE NOTE:

Cats metabolise medications differently to people and commonly available human medications to alleviate pain may be dangerous and even poison a cat. If you recognise behaviours in your cat that indicate pain, do not use any medication other than that prescribed by a veterinarian.

Altered flexibility and mobility:

- Generally lays with feet underneath
- Avoids or has difficulty stretching
- Reluctant to sharpen their claws
- Limp or doesn't put weight on a leg
- Avoids jumping, or can't leap as high as previously
- Avoids or has difficulty on stairs

Your cat's behaviour may alter and they may seem short tempered if in pain.

Behaviour changes may include:

- Acts out of character
- Doesn't want to be held, picked up, or petted
- Protects a part of the body
- Growls, hisses, spits or bites when one area touched
- Pins ears back
- Is aggressive to humans or other cats





Management of pain

Once your veterinarian has diagnosed that your cat is in pain and assessed to what degree, they will decide on which medications and lifestyle alterations are most appropriate to treat the pain. Pain relieving medications may have side effects and your veterinarian will discuss any risks associated with the medication prescribed for your cat.

Medications may be administered for short periods of time, as would occur with surgical procedures, or for extended periods as would occur in the treatment of chronic conditions such as osteoarthritis. It is important that pain relieving medications are used as prescribed by your veterinarian. Please complete the entire course and contact your veterinarian if behavioural changes return after the course is completed.

Importance of the Revisit

Pain is a normal response from the body when challenged with trauma or disease. When pain continues without effective management, the altered behaviours caused by pain remain, thus becoming new behaviours. Ongoing reassessment by your veterinarian will provide an optimum outcome by ensuring pain control is effectively managed now and on an on-going basis.

Produced by:

Norbrook Laboratories
Australia Pty Ltd.
7/1 Trade Park Drive
Tullamarine, VIC 3043,
Australia

Norbrook NZ Ltd
KPMG Centre
18 Viaduct Harbour Avenue
Auckland

