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Pets and Their People Veterinary Surgeries

Unley, Wayville and
Fulham Gardens

Signs of Pain in Cats

Animals have the same pain sensors humans have, but they express their pain differently.

- *If an action hurts, they just avoid doing it (clever creatures).* If they can't avoid pain, then more subtle signs are expressed. Because cats can't communicate their pain verbally, they often manifest the physical signs of pain differently than humans. We need to learn their body language of pain.
- *Our pets generally will not whine, moan, or cry out with pain.* Even with a broken limb, many cats and dogs may hop along on three legs and not make a peep.
- *Many of the signs of pain are also signs of anxiety.* In fact, pain is thought to cause a level of anxiety in animals, which makes sense!
- *The site of pain may determine the behaviors, but not always.* For example, dental pain is often missed, as pets generally only refuse to eat or paw at their mouths if they are in extreme pain with teeth falling out on their own. As humans, we would certainly be seeking dental help long before that ever happened!
- *It is not okay for our pets to be in pain.* Veterinary medicine and allied professionals have advanced a long way, and we have more and more tools to treat

painful, please have s/he checked out. We will work with you to find the right solution for your furry family member.

Do you understand the language of feline pain?

- Reduced activity: sleeping more, jumping less, playing less
- Loss of curiosity and interaction
- Hiding or attempts to escape
- Excessive licking or grooming, or failing to groom
- Poor appetite
- Changes in toileting: accidents in unusual places, sometimes near litter pans
- Tail flicking
- Fast breathing or heart rate
- Reaction (growling, guarding) to handling of painful areas
- Posture changes
 - Lying hunched-up, with all four feet under the body
 - Lying flat-out with dilated pupils
 - Frequent 'downward dog' stretches
 - Stiff posture or abnormal walk
- Facial changes
 - Furrowed brow
 - Squinted eyes
 - Flattened ears

both acute and chronically painful pets. So if you are concerned that your cat is