



Tabitha Kucera CCBC, RVT, KPA-CTP

Chirrupsandchatter.com

Chirrup and Chatter offers education lectures, workshops, and behavior consulting to shelters.

IT'S PAIN AWARENESS MONTH

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT OUR FURRY FRIENDS CAN EXPERIENCE PAIN TOO.

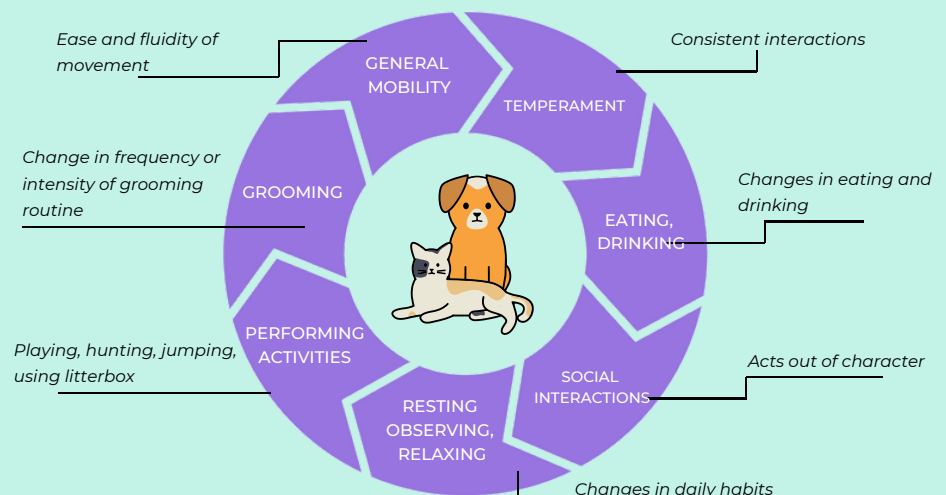
Just like us, animals experience physical pain in various ways and to different degrees. They go through surgical procedures and experience health conditions such as arthritis and cancer. While acute pain may be obvious, chronic pain can often be subtle, sometimes even mistaken for the effects of aging.

Remember, aging is a natural process, but that doesn't mean your pet should be in pain as they age. As they get older, they may be more prone to discomfort, but it's essential to distinguish between normal aging and signs of pain.

Did you know that understanding your pet's behavior is crucial to recognizing and assessing their pain?

“Animals are non-verbal and cannot self-report the presence of pain, so the burden of pain assumption, recognition, and assessment lies with veterinary professionals. It is now accepted that the most accurate method for evaluating pain in animals is not by physiological parameters but by observations of behavior.” - AAHA/AAFP pain management guidelines for cats and dogs.

In short, behavior speaks louder than words. So observing an animal's behavior is the most accurate way of evaluating their pain levels. As a caregiver and/or veterinary or animal welfare professional, you play a crucial role in identifying signs and signals that your animal or the animal in your care might be in pain.





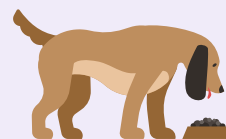
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HERE ARE SOME KEY THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- Maintenance of normal behavior: You know your pet best, so watch for changes in their ability to maintain their usual activities and habits. Are they enjoying their favorite activities, eating their normal diet and favorite treats, resting in their favorite areas, and having the same urination and defecation habits?
- Loss of normal behaviors: Have you noticed a loss in their normal behaviors? Examples can include a decreased, picky, or absent appetite, not seeking attention, decreased play or not playing at all and you may note changes in the animal's mobility. They may be reluctant to move, slow to rise and/or lay down, hesitate to jump, and have an unsteady gait.
- Development of new behaviors: Cats and dogs may develop new behaviors as they adapt to pain. These could include anxiety, excessive grooming, licking a particular body region, sensitivity and irritability with touch and being handled, exhibiting aggressive behaviors, and beginning to become withdrawn and hide.



The good news is that there are numerous options available to manage and alleviate pain in animals once the source of pain is identified. These include pain medications, adapting the environment to their needs (low entrance litter boxes, elevated food and water, orthopedic beds, non-slip surfaces, etc), physical rehabilitation, acupuncture, and more!

Early detection and treatment are essential to ensure your furry friend continues to lead a happy and comfortable life. After all, physical and mental health go hand in paw.

ADVOCATE FOR YOUR PET BY LOOKING FOR CHANGES IN THEIR NORMAL, LEARNING THE SIGNS, TAKING VIDEOS, SHARING WITH THE VETERINARY TEAM, AND MONITORING AND ADJUSTING THEIR MULTIMODAL PAIN MANAGEMENT PLAN AS NEEDED.



Tabitha Kucera is an Elite Fear Free and Low-Stress Handling Certified RVT, VTS (Behavior), CCBC, and KPA-CTP. She enjoys helping people better understand and relate to animals. She offers individualized consulting to professionals and organizations on topics such as compassionate communication, understanding animal behavior, and implementing behavior programs. Tabitha also offers educational presentations and hands-on workshops.