

Osteoarthritis in pets: what should I look for?

Guelph – ON, With age, our pets slow down, sleep more and become less active. Although this decreased intensity is often normal, sometimes it is related to pain caused by osteoarthritis. Many signs, which are fairly distinct, can indicate that your pet is in pain.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Although osteoarthritis is common in older pets, other factors can play an important role as well:



THE SIGNS OF OSTEOARTHRITIS IN DOGS

Is your dog climbing the stairs slower than he/she used to? Is getting into the car more difficult? Is he/she sleeping more frequently? Your pet might have joint disease.

The following are classic signs of osteoarthritis in dogs:

- Stiffness after vigorous activity
- Stiffness when getting up or after a long period of lying down
- Reluctance to jump into the car or take stairs
- Less vigour during walks
- Tendency to lick or chew affected joints
- Limping

THE SIGNS OF OSTEOARTHRITIS IN CATS

Cats walk on the tips of their toes, walk quietly and stealthily, have amazing balance and can jump seven times their own height!

Because of this, their owners often think that cats don't get joint problems and fail to recognize the signs. Unfortunately, our older kitties can also develop osteoarthritis. In fact, this condition affects nearly 90% of cats over 12 years of age.

Cats who suffer from osteoarthritis are less inclined to climb onto even low perches and have more difficulty grooming themselves, because they have lost joint flexibility. They may also stop using their scratching post.

The following are a few symptoms often observed in cats with osteoarthritis:

- They neglect their grooming
- They cannot jump as high as they used to
- They soil outside their litterbox
- They sleep less or sleep more
- They hide and avoid contact with their family members

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT MY PET HAS OSTEOARTHRITIS

If you are concerned about your pet's behaviour and think they may be in pain, talk to your veterinary healthcare team right away. Your veterinarian may prescribe a joint pain treatment plan that can include medication, alternative therapies and/or weight loss program.



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