

RECOGNISING SIGNS OF PAIN IN CATS

Cats tend to hide their pain, making it easy to miss signs of illness. In the wild any sign of weakness would make a cat more vulnerable to predators. Like their wild ancestors, domestic cats are practised at hiding signs of pain and discomfort but there are still some important clues to look out for.



Many changes in behaviour could indicate pain and should be discussed with your veterinary team.

Examples include:

- No longer accessing preferred sleeping areas
- Changes in drinking or appetite
- Hiding
- Sitting still or hunched up
- Losing interest in people or other pets
- Reluctance to play, interact or exercise / alternatively becoming clingy
- Changes in grooming – either under grooming or over grooming / reluctance to be groomed
- Loss of appetite
- Over-grooming a specific area
- Purring, excessive meowing or other unusual vocalisations
- Restlessness
- Not using litter tray
- Aggression – more likely to bite and scratch

Signs of acute pain can include:

- Avoiding bright areas
- Growling, groaning or miaowing
- Loss of appetite
- Closed eyes
- Flattened ears

Physical sign you may notice include:

- Hesitation in jumping up or down
- Matted fur
- Twitching of muscles either when touched or spontaneously
- Changes in breathing – faster and shallower breathing than normal
- Changes to eyes – changes in pupil dilation, squinting / half closed eyes
- Swelling or inflammation
- Abnormal gait
- Limping
- Difficulty in jumping or moving more slowly than normal

Will these signs always be noticeable?

As only a few of these behaviours may be seen and they may be very subtle in less acutely painful conditions, what's important is to look for any pattern in changes to your cat's behaviour or routine. As a pet owner you'll have a pretty good idea of what's "normal" for your pet- so can easily recognise what's not.

Any information you can provide will help your vet build a better picture of the problem.