

DCAH Newsletter

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Does Your Pet Feel Pain?

Would you know if your pet was in pain? You would not be alone if you answered no to this question. Astonishingly, even as recently as 15 years ago, the veterinary profession did not address analgesia (pain control) routinely in our patients. It was assumed, obviously incorrectly, that animals do not feel pain like people do. Most of us have come to realize now that animals do experience pain, but are much less obvious about expressing it. Because animals cannot verbally express what they are feeling, indicators such as heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory rate are used to determine the level of discomfort. All of these parameters will be increased proportionally with the animal's perceived pain level.

So what if you think your pet might be having pain at home? A cat who is painful will typically hide—under the bed, in the backs of closets, behind the sofa. They will often have a decrease in appetite as well. An outdoor cat may not be interested in running out that door anymore. It is NOT likely that a cat will vocalize that pain. Only in very extreme conditions will a cat make any audible indicator of pain. If your cat **does** all of a sudden begin yowling or screaming, assume he or she is in immediate need of attention and call us right away. It is very important to note that cats **cannot** be given any over-the-counter pain medications. **Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is particularly deadly to cats.** There are some newer veterinary prescription antiinflammatories that can be used in cats, as well as some nutritional and herbal supplements that work well.

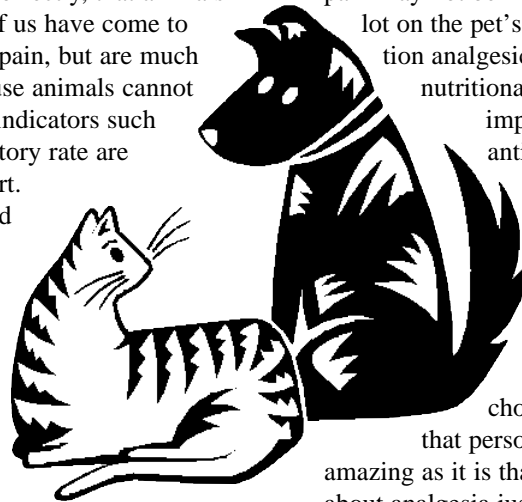
It's a bit easier for dog owners to appreciate that their pet is uncomfortable. Because a dog is usually more mobile, you may see him or her limp. Any animal who is limping is most certainly in pain. A dog's family may also notice the pet panting, even when not exerting himself. The dog may lick

excessively at the affected area. A facial expression of anxiety may also be noted by the dog's owner, and the dog is more likely to give a vocal clue than the cat is—whining, yelping, screaming when touched in the painful area. Again, a dog in pain may not be inclined to eat as well, though that depends a lot on the pet's personality. There are many new prescription analgesics (pain medications) for dogs, as well as the nutritional and herbal supplements mentioned. It is important to note that pets who are receiving antiinflammatories for chronic pain should have labwork done regularly to make sure that these medications are not causing any harm to their kidneys or liver, in particular.

Do not ever give a medication to your pet without checking first with a veterinary professional.

What about surgical pain? Whenever you choose a veterinarian, one of your questions to that person should be about their approach to pain. As amazing as it is that the profession as a whole did not worry about analgesia just a few years ago, there are still many veterinarians who do not adequately address this aspect of their patients' care. In our end of the county, when we did a recent phone survey, we were told by some receptionists, in response to a query about what pain meds are given post-operatively to their patients—"oh, animals don't really need pain medication like we do." Any patient in **our** hospital who is undergoing a surgical procedure **will** be given pre- and post-operative injections of pain medications, and are usually sent home with pain medications as well. Can **you** imagine having a hysterectomy (which is what a spay is) or an amputation of digits (a declaw) without the benefit of pain control?

The bottom line is, animals can and do experience pain for lots of reasons, and it is your job as their companion and our job as your health care provider to determine the level of pain and the best approach to alleviating it. 🐾



Attention—Job Openings!

It occurs to us that we should look amongst our pet-loving clientele to see if we can find employees when we have openings. After all, we know that our clients love their pets and are committed to the best veterinary care available. So, periodically, when we have a position available, we will advertise it here. In between newsletters, however, if you find yourself in need of a job and feel veterinary medicine might be of interest to you, check with us. We are currently interviewing for positions as weekend night attendant and veterinary assistants. Even when positions are not open, we can certainly accept your application to keep on file for future openings. 🐾

Have a Heart Fund

Thanks to the following contributors this quarter including the young girl who sent us this letter accompanying her contribution:

Joanne Luce (In memory of Max)
Shawn and Katharine Thomson
Susan MacDuff
Nina Manganaris
Patricia Johnson (In memory of
Mimmie, Ginger, and Bobby)
Dave and Wilda Cummings
Charles and Angela Allgood

Eileen Williams
Teresa Johnson
Joseph and Marcher Castell
(In memory of Muttley)
John and Shirley Foust
(who adopted one of
Pumkin's kittens)
Kelsi and Katie Gaskill 🐾

Dale City Animal Hospital,
Here are some donations that my sister
and I have made from a lemonade stand.
I'm giving you this because I love animals.
I also went to vet camp over there. I
hope you will use it well. I giving this to
you instead of any other animal hospital
because that is where my dog Sam goes
and he has a tumor. I hope you like it
even though it is only \$8.00
Love, Kelsi Gaskill

Meet The Doctors

This quarter our newsletter features Dr Allison Mayo. She has been with the animal hospital for ten years. In addition to being a veterinarian here, she is also one of the owners of this animal hospital and Gunston Animal Hospital in Lorton, VA.

Although Dr Mayo was a Navy "brat" and lived many places, she has been a Virginian since 1985 when she graduated from W.T. Woodson High School. She also received her veterinary medicine degree locally from Virginia Tech in 1989. She worked at Ridgelake Animal Hospital in Lakeridge for five years after graduation. She then did relief work at Ft Hunt Animal Hospital and Barcroft Cat Clinic for six months. In 1994, she and Dr. Teri Levinstein, a colleague from Ridgelake, decided to buy Dale City Animal Hospital. Several years later they also bought Gunston Animal Hospital. For the last ten years, Dr Mayo has been the heart and soul of Dale City Animal Hospital serving as both an owner and a veterinarian.

Although Dr. Mayo's supervisory duties require a significant commitment of time, she is first and foremost a veterinarian. She is an excellent surgeon, but she prefers the challenge of the diagnostic aspect of medicine. She enjoys working with our clients to diagnose and treat their pets' ailments. She also is committed to educating clients about the best way to care for their pets.

In addition to her work in the hospital, Dr. Mayo is quite active in the community. She regularly does school visits, participates in sophomore interview days, gives talks at Chinn library, sponsors observation programs at the hospital for young people interested in veterinary medicine, and conducts educational tours of the hospital emphasizing animal safety for a variety of groups like the Girl Scouts.

On a personal note, she married Kevin Mayo (who works at AOL) in 1995. They have four children (three boys and one girl) ranging in age from two to eight). Her daughter Rebecca often accompanies her mother to work and wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up. Rounding out her household are four dogs, five cats, and four birds.

Given her busy life balancing responsibilities at home, at work, and in the community, it is not surprising that when asked what her favorite hobby is, she answered, "Sleeping!!"

We suspect that she has little time to indulge that favorite pastime. 🐾



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