

Recognising signs of pain in your pet

Dogs are notoriously good at hiding signs of pain, which is great as a survival tactic in the wild but not so good for the owners of domesticated dogs wanting to ensure their dog's quality of life and wellbeing. Rest assured, with a good understanding of your dog's personality and a keen eye for certain behaviours, you can be confident you'll notice subtle indicators of pain and be able to act on them appropriately.



Why do dogs conceal pain?

In wild species, learning to conceal signs of injury, disease and pain prevents them from being perceived as weaker and thus an easy target for predators.

Are there any signs I can look out for?

Yes. As a descendant of wild wolves, our domesticated dog breeds are practiced at hiding signs of pain and discomfort, but there are still some important clues you can look for.



What are the typical signs of pain in dogs?

General behaviour: Shaking, flattened ears, low posture, aggression, grumpy temperament, panting or crying, excessive licking or scratching a specific area, reluctant to play, interact or exercise, lameness (limping), stiffness after rest, loss of appetite.

On touch or inspection: Licking lips, flinching, turning head, moving to avoid touch, crying or vocally reacting, panting, increase in respiratory or heart rate, warmth of area, redness of area, swelling of area.

Our guide to... Recognising signs of pain in your pet

Will these signs always be noticeable?

Not necessarily. It's important to consider that often only a few of these behaviours are seen when an animal is in pain, and whilst they may be noticeable in an acutely painful condition, in more progressive or chronically painful conditions, these behaviours may be much subtler.



What's important to look for is any pattern to changes in your dog's behaviour. You can monitor your pet to see:

- *Do certain behaviours become common after exercise?*
- *Are behaviours more pronounced in the morning or evening?*
- *Are you more likely to see these behaviours after a longer walk at the weekend rather than a shorter one during the week?*

This information will help you and your vet to build a picture of the problem, control it appropriately and monitor for changes.



How can pain management help?

Whether it's related to an acute injury or a more chronic one, there are several approaches to pain management in dogs. Where possible, the direct cause of the pain will be addressed; however, if this is not an option, the pain management approach taken will depend on the following:

- *The type of pain*
- *How long it has been present (chronicity)*
- *Any other health issues your dog may have*

Lots of simple changes can help ease discomfort in a long-standing painful condition, such as pacing levels of activity, or making minor changes to the home environment.

At Davies Therapy and Fitness Centre, our pain management team will assess your dog, provide helpful exercise guidance and utilise a variety of treatment techniques to alleviate the pain and discomfort they are suffering. To find out more visit www.vetspecialiststherapy.co.uk.

Ask your vet about a referral today.