

Care Guides

Arthritis Management in Cats and Dogs

Osteoarthritis is a progressive and painful condition due to damage and deterioration of the joints. It commonly affects hips, elbows, knees, and wrists, but can potentially affect any joint in the body. Some animals experience arthritis without visibly showing pain; for others it is a crippling and painful condition. All pets can be helped to reduce pain, promote joint health and slow down the progression of disease if you can detect the subtle early changes.

Exercise

Little and often exercise can be better than long infrequent periods of exercise at keeping joints and muscles supple and comfortable. Avoid games and exercise which puts excessive pressure on joints such as sharp turns chasing balls.

Joint Supplements

An increasing amount of scientific study is being performed to demonstrate the benefits of joint supplements. Glucosamine, chondroitin, green lipped muscle, omega fatty acids and turmeric have all been reported to help. There are a number of pet products on the market and your vet or nurse can help you to choose the most appropriate for your pet. Self-medicating can be dangerous so always seek advice. Supplements can help slow progression, promote joint health and aid joint repair but they rarely can help reduce pain.

Pain Relief (Analgesia)

In most cases, pain relief is eventually used to improve or maintain the quality of life of our arthritic pets. There are different drugs that are suited to each individual and your vet can help you to choose the most appropriate for your pet. It is important not to self-medicate as many human drugs, and even some animal drugs, can be harmful or even toxic to pets.

Hydrotherapy and Physiotherapy

Keeping joints supple and in use will help to stop your arthritic pet from becoming stiff and prevent muscle wastage. Hydrotherapy is useful as it encourages pets to be active without putting weight on sore limbs. The warmth and pressure of the water can also aid aches and pains. Physiotherapy exercises can be used to gently manipulate sore limbs to prevent muscle loss and to improve blood flow to affected limbs. Please contact us for advice if you are considering referral to a hydrotherapist or physiotherapist.

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Nutrition

Attention to weight and good nutrition is important in managing osteoarthritis. Overweight pets put more force and strain on sore, damaged joints and so weight loss can improve comfort and mobility. A good balanced diet with supplements to aid joint health is recommended in arthritic pets. Please speak to your vet or nurse for more information.

Laser Therapy

At Friars Moor we are able to offer therapeutic laser therapy as some of our vets and nurses have undergone further training in this treatment. The K-Laser enables us to calculate and administer a dose of laser energy to the affected joint and surrounding muscles. This decreases inflammation yet promotes blood supply to the affected areas, reducing pain and promoting more comfortable joints. It is well tolerated and can help some animals with chronic pain. Please call for more information or see the video on our website.

What can I do?

There are some subtle signs of arthritis that as an owner you can identify when your pet is suffering from arthritis:

	Dogs	Cats
Mobility	Stiff or stretching more when getting up Struggling to climb stairs or to jump in the car etc	Stiff or stretching more when getting up Struggling with jumping / passing through cat flaps
Behaviour	Snappy or intolerant of other animals or people Anxious or more attached to you Less playful	Less tolerant of people Hiding or less interactive
Activity	Lethargic and resting more Less keen to play or walk	Increased sleeping
Other	Increased grooming or licking of particular joints Decreased grooming of back or hard to reach areas	Decreased grooming leading to matted hair and dirty coat

If you notice any of these, please book in for an appointment with your veterinary surgeon to discuss your concerns and for an examination of your pet.