



Pain Control

Pain control is a fairly new concern for most of us visiting veterinarians in the 21st century. I know that in the past, veterinarians had used pain as an indicator of when to euthanize an animal. That is still true, because we want to ensure that our pets have a high quality of life, and an animal in pain is not having a high quality of life—but now we have more options available to prevent and lessen pain. Pain control must be one of our highest goals as feline caregivers.

We also have to recognize that many humans feel a little bit of pain and do quite well. It may be so with our companion animals also. Thus, we have to do some research, consult our veterinarians, consult our animals, and weigh what we know to reach a balance and a conclusion.

Indicators of pain

Know your cat! If you know how your cat reacts, if you can understand his body language and vocalizations, if you are familiar with her habits, you are in a very good position to determine if perhaps your cat is in pain.

The Cornell Book of Cats

notes that indicators of pain include a cat that wants to be alone or hides (this is where you have to know your cat—does he usually like to be alone, or is this a different behavior for him?), a cat who pants, and a placid cat who growls. Other indicators may be a normally active cat who suddenly wants to be still, a cat who does not sleep, or a cat who has lost interest in eating.

Ways to Control Pain

Ask your vet—do not attempt to use human medications for cats—some are deadly. Do not use aspirin or anything with aspirin ingredients.

Some pain relievers that some of our members have used include massage, acupressure, acupuncture, glucosamine (for arthritis), Omega 3 fatty acids, and the fentanel pain patch (by prescription only) see: <http://www.winnfelinehealth.org/health/fentanyl-patches.html> This site also includes a useful discussion on how pain works and different types of pain.

There are a number of other options, including some NSAIS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, steroids, and muscle relaxers. See <http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=C&C=299&S=2> for a discussion of these alternatives.

The Bottom Line

Know your cat; be sensitive to her needs; always consult your veterinarian; do some research of your own; honor your cat's quality of life—you are his guardian, a heavy responsibility that sometimes includes life and death decisions.

Second edition, 1989, 1997, Mordecai Siegal and Cornell University, Random House, USA, p. 344.