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## **Assessing Pain In Your Pet**

Unfortunately our animals cannot tell us when they are experiencing pain; however they may display a variety of different behaviors that can show us when they are painful.

There are many different types of pain. Some are easy to identify, such as the acute pain that comes with a traumatic injury or surgery, but some can be more difficult to identify, such as chronic arthritis in older pets. Below is a list of behaviors that may be associated with pain or discomfort in animals.

- Vocalizing – growling, whining, groaning, yelping or purring (cats).
  - While cats may purr when they are content, they may also purr in response to stress such as pain.
- Facial Expression – fixed stare, glazed or squinted eyes, dilated pupils, furrowed brow
- Body posture – hunched or rigid
- Decreased appetite
- Restlessness
- Reluctance to move
- Trembling
- Urinating outside of the litter box
- Change in normal activity
  - No longer jumping up on beds, couches, counters etc
  - Reluctance to climb stairs
  - Reluctance to play
- Attitude changes – aggression, fearfulness, comfort seeking, hiding from owner
  - Some types of pain such as arthritis may cause your pet to show aggression or shy away when they are being touched due to a pain in that area.
- Unkempt appearance/no longer grooming
- Chewing or biting at surgical site or painful area
- Lying in an abnormal position
  - Some types of pain such as abdominal pain, back pain, or arthritis may cause an animal to lie in a position that is abnormal for them. If you notice that your pet has suddenly changed the way he/she sits or lies down it may be an attempt to alleviate pain.
- Limping, non-weight bearing
- Protecting limb or wound
- Panting

There are many methods available to help control pain in our pets. It is our goal to keep your pet as comfortable as possible at all times. Identifying when pain is present is the first step to treating and controlling pain. As an owner, you spend the most time with your animal and therefore are in the best position to interpret their pain levels. Remember, you know your animal best. If you have any concern that your pet may be experiencing pain, please call our office to discuss how to best manage your pet's pain.