

## of Joint Pain in Dogs and Cats

In the next few months of cooler weather there will be a significant increase in the number of dogs and cats presented to us with symptoms of joint pain and stiffness.

Some of these pets will have age-related osteoarthritis, others will have degenerative changes in their joints due to underlying joint disorders e.g. hip dysplasia, cruciate ligament disease.

Dogs with joint pain often become much less active, have difficulty rising from a sitting or lying position, and are very slow and deliberate when negotiating the reverse maneuver. These symptoms are often most obvious in early morning and the evening. They often have a gait similar to that of the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*. They may even exhibit a personality change (e.g. Dogs may snap at the children during play, cats may hiss or growl when picked-up and become more reclusive).

The management of joint pain requires an integrated approach:

- Is your pet overweight? Excess body condition will exacerbate joint pain dramatically. This cannot be overstated. In our experience, the most expedient way to rectify this is to come and talk to us about the use of our specialised pet foods designed for weight loss. Cat and Dog foods labeled *lite* will generally not result in weight loss.
- Dogs with joint pain benefit from very gentle exercise to maintain joint mobility and muscle mass. If you are uncertain, talk to us.
- Is your pet in a warm, comfortable environment at night?
- Medication: Moderate to severe joint pain in dogs and cats may necessitate the use of anti-inflammatory medications. Anti-inflammatories offer the benefit of potent pain relief, but their safe use necessitates consultation with your Veterinarian. Often a trial period on these medications convinces even the most skeptical pet owner of their benefits.
- Dogs with mild joint pain may benefit from the *slow-acting* medications for osteoarthritis. These medications often decrease joint inflammation, but may also offer the benefit of *chondroprotection* (protecting and repairing joint cartilage).

Nutritional advice is free at The Gap Vet Surgery and some of the chondroprotective medications can be purchased over-the-counter. However, it may be wise to have your pet examined by a Veterinary Surgeon prior to undertaking a treatment course.

Kind Regards

Scott and Chris