

# Evaluating & Managing Your Pet's Pain



**RBVH.**  
Red Bank Veterinary Hospital

## UNDERSTANDING PET PAIN MANAGEMENT

Pain is a response to injury or illness, and it is as common in pets as it is in people. We typically consider pain to be a bad thing because it leaves those we love feeling uncomfortable and unable to participate in everyday activities. However, the sensation of pain is a protective mechanism that forces us to take it slow and allow injuries to heal without further damage.

Animals, especially, are very skilled at hiding pain, even from those who know them best. In the wild, this prevents predators from knowing they are sick or injured.

Our team of dedicated veterinarians and technicians is skilled at interpreting the physical signs of pain and approaching your pet's comfort with the highest standard of care. Effective pain management improves the recovery process from illness, surgery, injury, and chronic pain conditions by finding the right balance of medication and exercise.

## TYPES OF PAIN

**Acute pain** occurs immediately after an injury or surgery and can be mild to severe. It typically lasts only a few weeks and goes away once the injury or surgery site has healed.

**Chronic pain** is caused by long-term conditions such as arthritis, that cannot be repaired; or it can be an extension of acute pain that has not resolved. It may even be debilitating and affect quality of life. Management is often an ongoing process, and patients may require long-term therapy.



## How Do I Know If My Pet Is In Pain?

- Dogs**
- Not eating
  - Trouble rising
  - Lack of playing
  - Hiding
  - Limping
  - Growling or other changes in behavior

- Cats**
- Not eating
  - Not grooming
  - Urinating inappropriately
  - Hiding
  - Not jumping on elevated surfaces
  - Hissing or other changes in behavior

## ADDRESSING YOUR PET'S PAIN

Our pain management specialists work with your doctor to localize and identify pain using physical and diagnostic tests. We will address patient discomfort with a combination of pharmaceutical therapies and alternative techniques to offer your pet the best chance at regaining mobility and function.

We use medications, or analgesics, to treat pain as part of the therapeutic plan. In many cases, these medications are required for a limited amount of time, often only one or two weeks. Sometimes the pain response can persist and become exaggerated, resulting in a chronic condition. Alternative techniques include, but are not limited to, cold laser therapy, acupuncture, and physical rehabilitation.

Treating chronic pain can be a complicated process. Pain management is a growing field in human and veterinary medicine and new analgesics and therapies are emerging constantly. Involving a pain management specialist that is devoted to your pet's long-term care can be an important factor in restoring quality of life.

## PAIN MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIONS

If your pet is experiencing pain as a result of one of the following situations, you may want to consider a consultation and evaluation by one of our board-certified anesthesiology and pain management specialists:

- Osteoarthritis
- Chronic back pain
- Cancer or advanced disease
- Nerve damage that has led to over-sensitivity to non-painful stimuli
- Chronic pain no longer responding to current medication
- Procedures associated with moderate to severe acute pain

To learn more, or to make an appointment with our Anesthesiology & Pain Management Department, please call (732) 747-3636 (Tinton Falls) or (856) 429-4394 (Mount Laurel).

## ANESTHESIOLOGY & PAIN MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

Board-certified veterinary anesthesiologists are specialists who focus on providing safe, optimal anesthesia specifically tailored to an individual pet. They are trained to anticipate, recognize, and care for any concerns associated with anesthesia. In addition to undergraduate training and four years of veterinary school, they complete an internship and residency in their specialized field (an additional three to five years). This is followed by a rigorous examination to achieve board-certification status from the American College of Veterinary Anesthesia and Analgesia (ACVAA). Passing this examination grants the status of Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Anesthesia and Analgesia (DACVAA).



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