



Guidelines



AAHA
Pain Management
Guidelines

TOOLKIT



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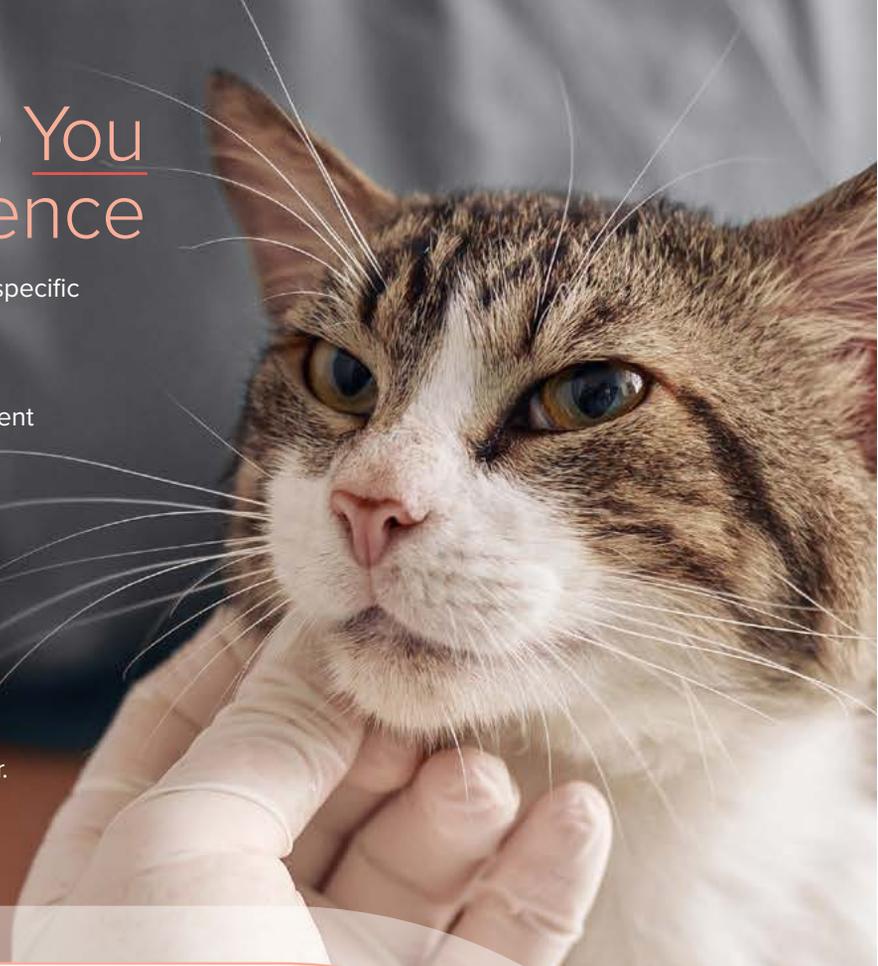
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Meet Dolores!



5 Scenarios Where You Can Make a Difference

- 1 When the pet owner mentions concerns about specific behaviors, but doesn't recognize their possible correlation to pain.
- 2 When you notice a hospitalized or boarded patient displaying signs or symptoms of pain.
- 3 Following up with a patient who starts a pain treatment plan at home.
- 4 Ensuring educational resources are available in the hospital for both clients and staff.
- 5 Working to help ALL team members to:
 - recognize the signs of pain.
 - know how and what info to convey to the owner.
 - make sure pain concerns are included in the patient's record for veterinarians to address.



Workflow Idea



Pet owner calls and reports older cat has not been using the litterbox appropriately.



Client care representative recommends owner take a video of the cat getting in and out of the litterbox if possible (or walking, jumping, etc. at home), schedules an appointment, and makes note of conversation in medical record.



Technician takes a detailed history from the owner during visit, watches the cat explore the exam room, and takes note of any observations made.



Veterinarian completes initial physical exam, diagnostics, and institutes treatment plan.



Technician follows up with owner.

CASE EXAMPLE

Chronic Pain in a Senior Cat

It takes a village to keep pets pain-free

Top Tips for Techs

5 ways to become your practice's Case Coordinator Technician

Learn to identify signs of pain

Master pain assessment tools

Create a hands-on demo

Develop workflow

Talk to owner

1 | **Learn** to identify the signs of pain in the exam room

In addition to taking a thorough history, observe the patient in the exam room. Watch for changes in how a dog walks in, if they sit down easily, and if they rise from sitting/lying down. Observe cats for ability to jump onto the counter or exam table, any hunched posture, or noticeable limping.

2 | **Master** pain assessment tools

Master pain assessment tools like the Feline Grimace Scale, Colorado Pain Scale, Glasgow Pain Scale, and Feline OA Checklist. In addition, familiarize yourself with other pain assessment methods and tools. (Please see table on page 4.)

3 | **Create** a hands-on demo on how to administer pain meds and handle pets at home

Get in front of the camera and create quick, simple videos to share on your practice's website, social media channels, or via email to clients. Helpful topics include:

- How to give liquid medication
- How to give pill medication
- Positive reinforcement and rewarding behavior
- Popular pill-hiding foods and treats
- How to get your cat used to and/or into their carrier
- Common signs of pain
- Gentle handling

It is important to focus on conscious awareness of gentle or animal-friendly handling of all patients—but especially the painful patient. As some owners do not appreciate their pet's condition in the absence of a clearly painful response to manipulation, it can be necessary to educate the client on nonverbal or less severe reactions given by the patient (e.g., holding the breath, licking the lips, looking away) versus vocalization.

This approach will also allow for a more complete physical examination with the pet's cooperation and will demonstrate to the client that the practice team has a strong awareness of the need to minimize the patient's pain.

4 | **Develop** workflow practices to regularly reach out to owners of pets on chronic pain meds and/or with pain concerns

Ideally, a case coordinator, usually a veterinary technician, would be delegated to regularly reach out to a pet owner and make sure that pain is being effectively managed and pets are willing and able to perform daily activities.

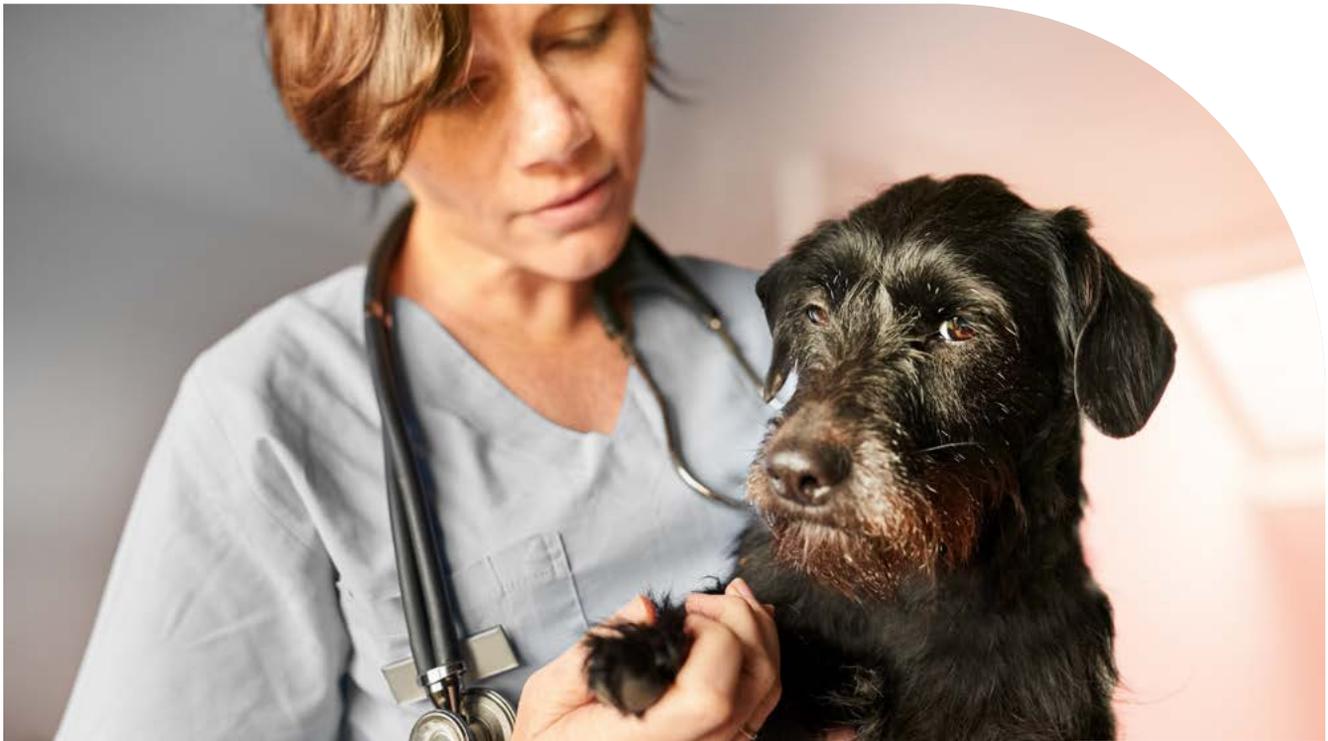
Communication between the technician and veterinarian is vital. Patients would then be reevaluated regularly (every 3–6 months) with additional evaluations if problems are identified by the case coordinator or owner. To optimize adherence, owners need to understand the reasons for early intervention, and therapy should minimize the financial, physical, emotional, and logistical burden placed on caretakers. The management of chronic pain is a continuing service that the veterinary team offers its clients.

Set up a workflow that works well for the owner and the team

- ✓ Start by confirming the client's communication preferences: phone, email, text or app notifications
- ✓ Next, set up reminders in your practice management system or worklists to ensure regular check-ins occur and are documented in the pet's medical record

5 | **Talk** to owners about recognizing and managing signs of pain

It's not uncommon for signs of pain in both dogs and cats to go unnoticed by their families. Be willing to talk to owners about recognizing early and progressing signs, and provide them with the client education materials your practice trusts (check out our pet owner resources). These conversations can take time, but help keep the pet feeling their best!



Pain Assessment Methods & Tools for Veterinary Technicians

(Adapted from Table 1)

	Acute Pain Tool	Chronic Pain Tool	Screening	Monitoring
Clinic Observation	✓	✓		✓
Hr/Rr/Bp	✓		✓	✓
Home Photos & Videos	✓	✓	✓	✓
Activity Monitoring		✓		✓
Colorado Acute Pain Scale	✓			✓
Glasgow Composite Measure Pain Scale	✓			✓
Unesp-Botucatu Multidimensional Composite Pain Scale	✓			✓
Feline Grimace Scale	✓		✓	✓
Feline OA Checklist		✓	✓	✓

When Clients Say...

She's not getting around like she used to

He looks kind of hunched

She doesn't come upstairs with us anymore

“He's peeing outside the box”

“She keeps licking a spot on her leg”

He hides under the bed all the time

“She's a little grumpy and hates being around the kids”

“He doesn't cry or whine but he's just laying around”

He doesn't want us to pet him anymore

“She's always panting”

She keeps waking us up at night

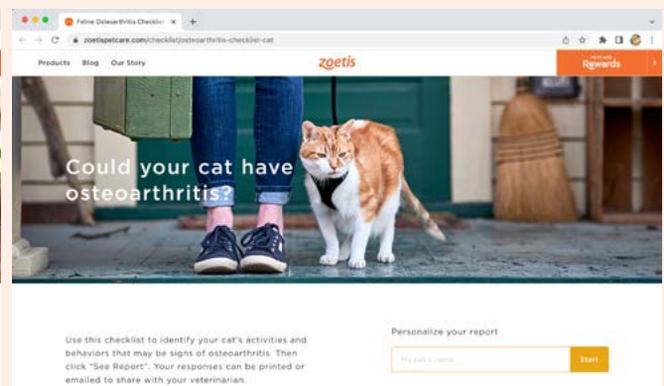
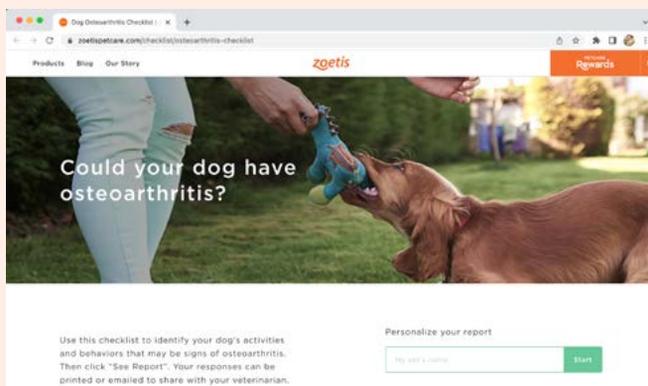
“I can't get her to eat”

“He won't jump into the car any more”

...It Could Mean Pain  Encourage owners to take videos of the pet at home to share, schedule a physical exam, and alert your veterinary care team.

Pet Owner Resources

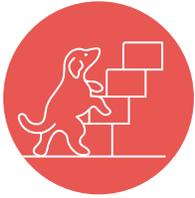
Check out these online osteoarthritis checklists and personalizable reports.



Scan QR code to download these pet owner resources



How to Be Your Pet's Pain Advocate



Look
for changes
in normal



Learn
the signs



Take
a video



Write
it down

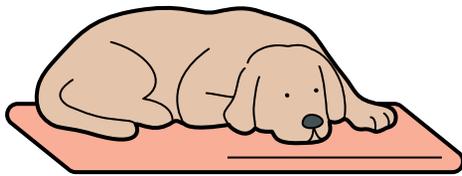


Share
with your
veterinary team

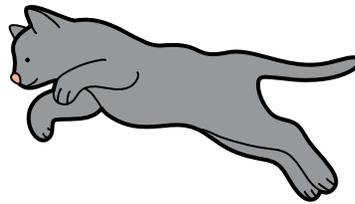


Monitor
and adjust

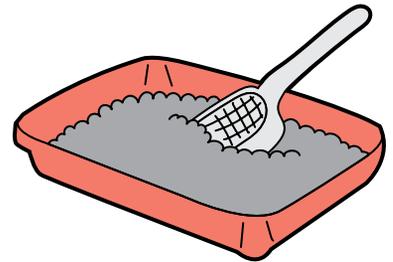
Signs of Potential Pet Pain



Slow
to rise



Changes in how cat
goes up/down steps or
jumps on/off things



Going outside
the litterbox



Less interest
in play



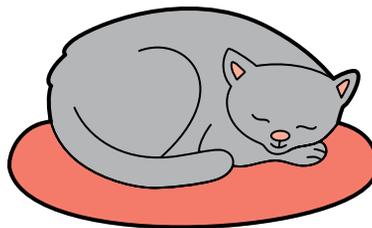
Decreased
grooming



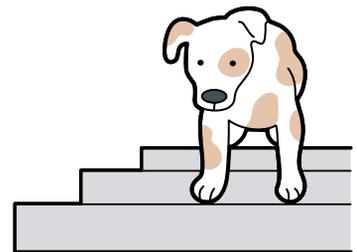
Irritability
or hiding



Licking or chewing
a certain spot



Less energy, increased
sleeping



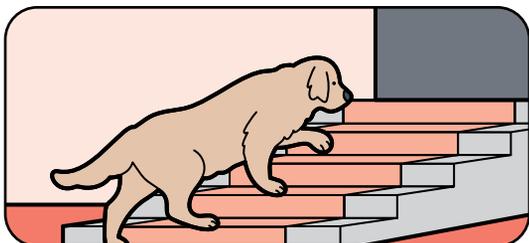
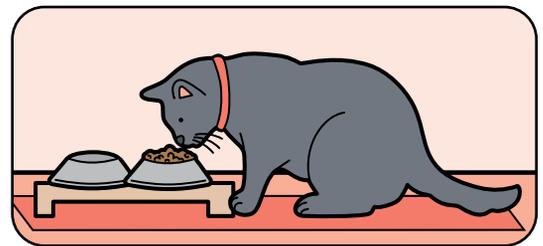
Difficulty with or
avoiding stairs

5 Ways to Pain Proof Your Pet's Home



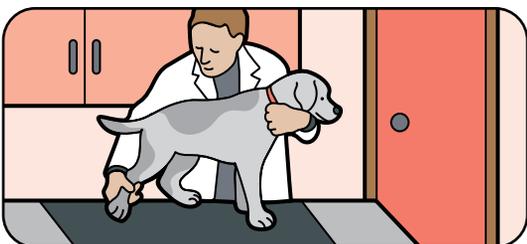
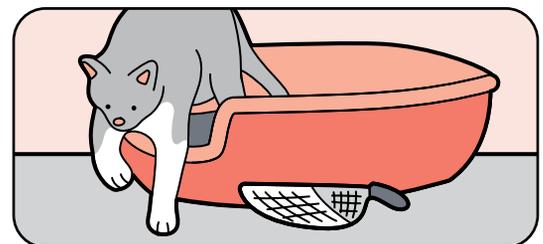
Make low-impact exercise routine. Get the OK from your vet first, but many pets benefit from regular low-impact exercise to keep muscle strength up and body weight down.

Keep bowls on the floor, slightly elevated, and with a rug beneath their feet so they can safely and securely eat and drink. The cat that used to jump onto a counter for food and water may not be able to... or only muster one jump a day.



Non-slip flooring is a must! The most fashionable homes include lots of rugs with pet hair, right? Add non-slip flooring like rugs, carpet or yoga mats to your pet's most traveled areas and especially on stairs to prevent slippage.

Keep it on the down low: litterbox entry. Many cats with arthritis and hidden pain will have difficulty climbing in and out of litterboxes, or find them too constrained to comfortably "assume the position." Make sure to have low entry boxes, and ideally one more than the number of cats in your household.



Regular veterinary visits. Your veterinary team can make specific recommendations for your pet's home based on their exam, and may suggest special food, treats, supplements or medications that may help.

Quiz Yourself!



Take this quiz with your teammates and see how your pain perception measures up.

An owner of a middle-aged cat asks you how she would know if her cat was starting to suffer from arthritis. Which of her cat's behaviors should you advise her to observe closely?

a. Running, jumping up, jumping down, time spent hiding, appetite, going up stairs

b. Running, jumping down, time spent hiding, appetite, going down stairs, going up stairs

c. Running, jumping down, jumping up, going up stairs, going down stairs, chasing objects

d. Running, time spent hiding, appetite, stiffness after rest, going up stairs, going down stairs

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