



## BELLEVUE ANIMAL HOSPITAL

### Behavioral Characteristics Associated with Pain in Dogs and Cats

#### Abnormal Posture

- Hunched up
- Guarding/splinting of abdomen
- “Praying” position (forequarters on the ground, hindquarters in the air)
- Sits or lies in an abnormal position
- Not resting in a normal position (i.e., sternal or curled up)

#### Abnormal Gait

- Stiff
- No to partial weight bearing on injured limb
- Slight to obvious limp

#### Abnormal Movement

- Thrashing
- Restlessness
- No movement when not sleeping

#### Vocalization

- Screaming
- Whining intermittent/constant/when touched)
- Crying (intermittent/constant/when touched)
- None

#### Miscellaneous

- Looks, licks, or chews at the painful area
- Increase sensitivity to stimuli
- Increase sensitivity to pain itself
- Painful response to a normally non-painful stimulus

#### Behavioral Characteristics that are associated with pain in cats and dogs but:

- May also be associated with apprehension/ anxiety
  - Restlessness/agitation
  - Trembling/shaking
  - Rapid breathing or panting
  - Weak tail wag
  - Low tail carriage
  - Slow to rise
  - Depressed (poor response to caregiver)
  - Not grooming
  - Bites/attempts to bite caregiver
  - Ears pulled back
  - Barking/growling –Dog (intermittent/constant/when approached)
  - Growling/hissing –Cat (intermittent/constant/when approached)

- Sits in the back of the cage/hides under a blanket – Cat

- May also be associated with poor general health (medical problems)
  - Restlessness/agitation
  - Trembling/shaking
  - Rapid breathing or panting
  - Weak tail wag
  - Low carriage of tail
  - Depressed/poor response to caregiver
  - Head hanging down
  - Not grooming
  - Appetite decreased/picky/absent
  - Dull
  - Lies quietly and does not move for hours: does not dream
  - Stuporous
  - Urinates/defecates and makes no attempt to move
  - Lying down and unaware of surroundings
  - Unwilling or unable to walk
  - Bites/attempts to bite caregivers
- May be normal behavior
  - Reluctance to move head (eye movement only)
  - Stretching all four legs when abdomen touched
  - Penis protrudes out of sheath
  - Cleaning (licking) a wound or incision

#### Physiological signs that can be associated with pain

- Rapid breathing or panting
- Rapid heart rate (mild, moderate, Severe)
- Dilated pupils

Note: These signs are not consistently present in painful states and may be present in any anxious or excited dog or cat. Rarely, low heart rate may be present in painful conditions associated with intrathoracic structures (masses), abdominal pathology, or after abdominal surgery, or shock.