

Identifying pain:

The enigmatic ways pets show—and hide—pain

Rehabilitation and pain management specialist Dr. Janice Huntingford says pets will clue us in on how they feel *if* we know what to look for.

Unfortunately, our pets can't just tell us when they hurt. Of course, there's no doubt when it's dinner time, right?

But the truth is, dogs won't always express pain by whining, and cats—they're masters at hiding pain. If you don't pay attention to the little clues that indicate your pet is hurting, you may miss when your pet needs your help.



The obscure cat

Cats are good at hiding their pain. So, if you notice your cat acting grouchy, flattening his ears back, really crouching up his body position, or—especially—hiding, it may be a good indication that your pet is experiencing pain.

Here are some other indicators:

- Not being able to jump up on a bed or counter
- Any issues with the litter box
- Not grooming or not wanting to be groomed
- A decrease in appetite
- Aggressive behavior when touched

The sad dog

Don't think that a dog whining or crying is the only indicator that a dog might be in pain. In fact, dogs will rarely whine or cry unless they are in severe pain. So, look for these other signs to recognize when your dog may be experiencing pain:

- A decrease in appetite
- Trembling
- Has a sad or tense “look” on his face like he is in pain
- Not using a leg
- Avoiding stairs
- Not greeting you as usual
- Crouching
- Taking a long time to urinate or defecate
- Excessively panting

