



**Companion Animal Behavioural Services**  
Creating Contentment From Knowledge And Kindness

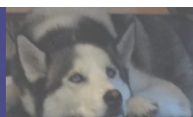
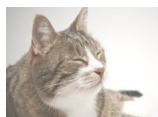
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# RECOGNISING PAIN AND STRESS IN CATS



Pain and chronic stress are responsible for promoting and exacerbating many diseases in cats which often results in cats expressing unwanted behaviours. Some cats may be more prone to stress and disease because of genetic factors and/or because they have been poorly bred and reared in their first few weeks of life.

Cats will often hide their pain so it's important to monitor your cat and report any changes in demeanour or unusual or unwanted behaviour to your vet.



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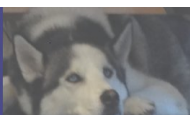
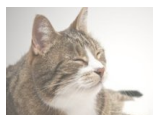
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### Recognising The Signs

An accident or something that causes intense pain is often easier to recognise; your cat may limp or yowl for instance. Chronic stress and pain is harder to see. Cats have a different facial musculature to dogs and humans. As solitary rather than social animals, they have less need to convey emotions to other cats or humans and can appear to be inscrutable. Look out for:

- Any change in behaviour - including hiding, aggression, inappetence etc
- Changes to grooming habits - stopping grooming or over-grooming
- Decreasing energy and activity - including in older cats
- Changes in sleeping patterns or habits
- Inappropriate elimination
- Changes to appetite and thirst - including eating unusual things (pica)
- Unusual facial expressions - including tension, flattened ears, closed eyes or dilated pupils
- Unusual body positions - hunching, low tail
- Changes to vocalisation - yowling, silence, hissing or growling
- Unusual breathing patterns.

You know your cat best. It is always worth calling your vet if you are at all concerned and especially if your cat is having difficulty urinating or not eating.



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### Avoiding Stress

A small amount of stress (eustress) plays an important part in keeping cats alert and safe and helps them to learn new things. However, when stress is extreme or prolonged, it can cause a great deal of damage.

Consistency and routine are important ways of keeping a cat's world predictable; cats are often much more susceptible to being stressed by changes in their environment than dogs. Any changes that are unavoidable such as moving litter trays or bowls should be made gradually. Food and water bowls should not be placed near a litter tray and separate resources should be provided for each animal in a multi-animal household and be placed where each animal can have access without encountering another animal.

Be sensitive to your cat's desire in interacting with humans; like people, cats have different personalities and some are more social than others. Indoor cats should have plenty of opportunity for exercise and stimulation. Cats feel safer when they are high up, so provide high and low hiding places indoors to enable your cat to choose to get away if desired.

Outdoor cats should have as much freedom of choice to enter and exit whilst remaining safe and should never be shut out entirely in case they need to escape from something frightening.

**Contact Companion Animal Behavioural Services at  
[info@dogsnet.org](mailto:info@dogsnet.org) for more help**

