

# HELPING CATS WITH ARTHRITIS



The vets at Mill Road recently attended a seminar presented by Prof. David Bennett, from the University of Glasgow, on arthritis in cats.

Traditionally it has been assumed that arthritis in the cat is rare &/or that cats do not suffer as a result of arthritis. One of the main reasons the disease has for so long been ignored in cats is the assumption that lameness is the main symptom, as it is in dogs, but in fact changes in lifestyle and behaviour give the clue that a cat is in chronic pain.

Several recent studies have found the prevalence of arthritis is around 20% in the general cat population and 65% of cats over 12 years of age.

Evaluating mobility problems in cats in the veterinary clinic is difficult. Cats will often just not move at all and it is difficult to know if reactions to physical examination are due to discomfort or aversion to being handled. Also cats are very good at masking pain.

Consequently, as vets, we rely heavily on owner observations of their cats at home:

## **MOBILITY** *Does your cat...*

- Hesitate before jumping up or down?
- No longer seem able to jump up to a bench or favourite high place?
- Walk stiffly?
- Sometimes eliminate inside the house or miss the litter tray?

## **ACTIVITY LEVELS** *Does your cat...*

- Spend more time sleeping or resting?
- Play less?
- Hunt less?

## **GROOMING HABITS**

- Is your cat's coat matted or scruffy?
- Do you notice your cat is grooming less often?
- Does your cat get his/her claws stuck in the carpet or use a scratching pole less?

## **TEMPERAMENT**

- Is your cat more grumpy with the family or with other cats in the household?
- Do you notice your cat spending more time alone?



Many people assume these changes are the results of "old age" but in fact they are often due to painful arthritis. Although arthritis is not curable, we can certainly reduce the suffering of these cats and slow the progression of the disease.

Unfortunately anti-inflammatories, which are widely used for arthritis in dogs, are often not appropriate for use in older cats. The good news is that a new product for arthritic cats has recently been released on the New Zealand market. Hills prescription j/d diet cat food has been clinically proven to improve mobility in as little as 28 days.

It contains high levels of omega-3 fatty acids which reduce cartilage degradation in the joints and glucosamine and chondroitin which provide building blocks for cartilage repair.

We also often have very good responses to a drug called cartrophen, which is frequently used to treat arthritis in dogs.

If you have any suspicions that your cat may be suffering from arthritis, please call us.

