

RECOGNISING SIGNS OF PAIN IN DOGS

Dogs have evolved to conceal signs of injury, disease and pain to prevent them from being perceived as an easy target for predators in the wild. Like their wild ancestors, domesticated dog breeds are practised at hiding signs of pain and discomfort but there are still some important clues to look out for.



On touch or inspection of painful areas you may notice:

- Licking lips
- Flinching
- Turning head
- Moving to avoid touch
- Crying or vocally reacting
- Panting
- Increase in respiratory or heart rate
- Warmth or redness or swelling of a specific area

Will these signs always be noticeable?

As only a few of these behaviours may be seen - and they may be very subtle in less acutely painful conditions - what's important is to look for any pattern in changes to your dog's behaviour or routine.

Many changes in behaviour could indicate pain and should be discussed with your veterinary team.

Examples include:

- Flattened ears/worried expression
- Avoiding some floor surfaces and stairs
- Altered sleeping position or posture
- Adopting unusual posture (praying)
- Increased anxiety
- Development of noise phobia
- Low posture
- Aggression
- Grumpy temperament
- Panting or crying
- Excessive licking or scratching a specific area
- Reluctance to play, interact or exercise
- Lameness, limping or bunny hopping
- Stiffness after rest
- Loss of appetite
- Reluctance to be groomed

Check to see

- If certain behaviours become common after exercise
- If they are most noticeable in the morning or evening
- Whether they are more likely to occur after a long rather than short walk

Monitoring your pet in this way will help your vet build a better picture of the problem