

New AAHA/AAFP pain management guidelines for dogs and cats now available

March 3 2015

The robust advances in pain management for companion animals underlie the decision of the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) to expand on the information provided in the previous 2007 AAHA/AAFP Pain Management Guidelines for Dogs and Cats. The 2015 Guidelines represent a consensus of expert opinions that summarize and offer a discriminating review of new research and knowledge. To access the Guidelines, visit:

<http://www.catvets.com/guidelines/practice-guidelines/pain-management-guidelines>.

Effective [pain management](#) is an essential component of companion animal medicine. It can reduce disease morbidity, facilitates recovery, and enhances quality of life. These Guidelines are particularly helpful for busy clinicians because they efficiently consolidate current recommendations and insights from experts in pain management. Pain management in clinical practice is a team effort, with the pet owner functioning as an integral part of the team. All healthcare team members should have a defined role in the practice's approach to providing compassionate care to its patients.

"The management of pain is a crucial component in every veterinary practice," said Mark Epstein, DVM, DABVP (Canine/Feline) CVPP, Guidelines Co-Chair. "Practices should be committed to educating the entire healthcare team about prevention, recognition, assessment, and treatment of pain. Alleviating pain is not only a professional obligation,

but also a key contributor to successful case outcomes and enhancement of the veterinarian-client-patient relationship."

"Pain management requires a continuum of care that includes anticipation, early intervention, and evaluation of response for every individual patient," said Ilona Rodan, DVM, DABVP (Feline), Guidelines Co-chair. "A team-oriented approach, that also includes the owner, is essential for maximizing the recognition, prevention, and treatment of pain for our patients. Client education is also a key component that enables the [pet owner](#) to manage pain in the home."

The 2015 Guidelines differ from the earlier version in several ways:

- The first sections contains general concepts designed to "set the stage" for the remaining, more specific content.
- The 2015 Guidelines also discuss the importance of an integrated approach to managing pain that does not rely strictly on analgesic drugs. Because [pain assessment](#) in animals has become more scientifically grounded in recent years, various clinically validated instruments for scoring pain in both dogs and cats are described.
- A section on feline degenerative joint disease has been added due to the increased awareness of this painful condition in cats over the last few years.
- The extensive list of published references includes numerous recent studies published within the last 3 years.

These [guidelines](#) were prepared by a task force of experts convened by the American Association of Feline Practitioners and the American Animal Hospital Association for the express purpose of producing this article. These guidelines are supported by a generous educational grant to

AAHA from Abbott Animal Health, Elanco Companion Animal Health, Merial, Novartis Animal Health, and Zoetis and are endorsed by the International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management and International Society of Feline Medicine. They were subjected to review in accordance with both AAFP and AAHA policies.

More information: To access the full set of guidelines, visit:
www.catvets.com/guidelines/practice-management-guidelines

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