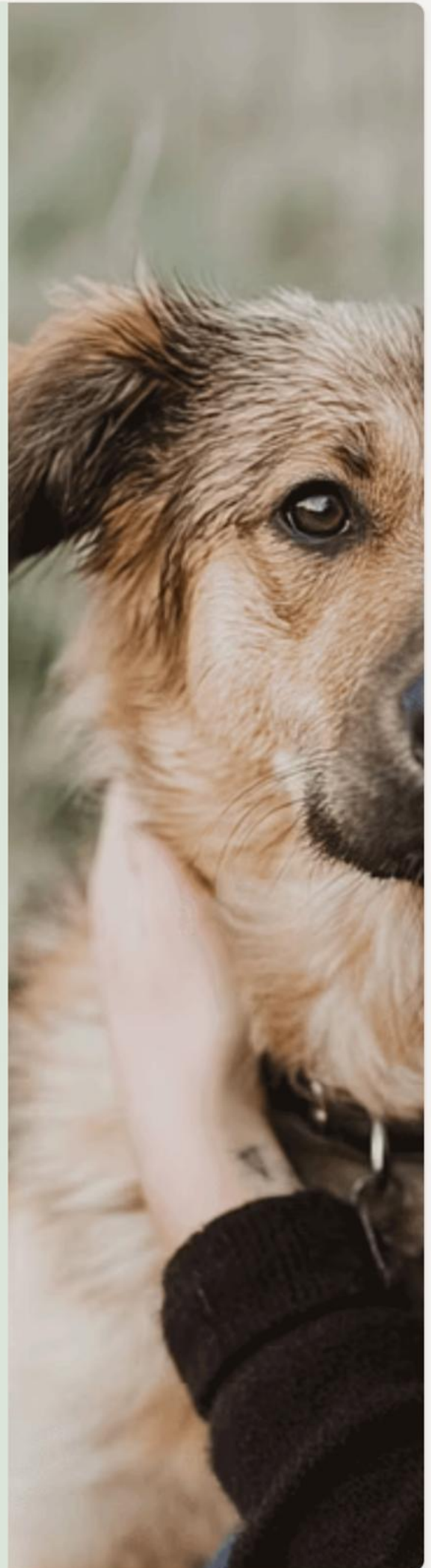


An Animal Wellness Observation Guide

What Is Your Animal Trying to Tell You?

A practical guide to noticing changes in
movement, behaviour, comfort, & wellbeing.

For pet owners, carers, and
animal professionals.



WHY IT MATTERS

Observation Is the First Step in Animal Wellness

Animals cannot tell us when something is wrong. They show us through subtle changes in how they move, behave, and respond. The earlier you notice, the sooner you can act.

1

They Show, Not Tell

Behavioural and physical changes are your animal's primary language. Learning to read them is a foundational wellness skill.

2

Early Detection Matters

Catching discomfort early - before it escalates - can reduce pain, simplify treatment, and improve outcomes significantly.

3

A Practical Framework

This guide gives you a structured way to notice, record, and act with confidence, whether you're a pet owner or a professional.



CHAPTER 1

MOVEMENT

Reading Posture & Movement

The way an animal holds and moves their body communicates volumes. Learn the four key areas to assess at a glance.

1

Head Carriage

A lowered or tilted head can signal pain, fatigue, or neurological changes worth monitoring.

2

Spine Alignment

Roaching, hollowing, or asymmetry may indicate muscle tension or underlying discomfort.

3

Weight Distribution

Watch for shifting weight off one limb, or reluctance to stand squarely on all four feet.

4

Gait

Shortened stride, toe-dragging, or uneven rhythm are all meaningful observations worth noting.



CHAPTER 2

MOBILITY

Stiffness, Limping & Reluctance to Move

1

Morning Stiffness

Slow to rise, hesitant on stairs, or stiff after rest. These are common and often overlooked signs of joint discomfort.

2

Intermittent Lameness

A limp that comes and goes is still worth monitoring carefully. Intermittent does not mean insignificant.

3

Reluctance to Engage

Refusing to jump, climb, or participate in usual activities is a meaningful signal, not just stubbornness.

☐ Stiffness is not always obvious. Look for hesitation, not just limping.



☐ Our Animal Massage Course teaches therapeutic massage, acupressure and gentle bodywork techniques to support healing, movement, range of motion and wellbeing.

CHAPTER 3

DAILY BEHAVIOUR

Changes in Appetite, Sleep & Daily Behaviour

Wellness shows up in routines. When familiar patterns shift, pay attention. These are your animal communicating a change in how they feel.



Appetite Shifts

Eating less, eating faster, or dropping food can all indicate oral pain, nausea, or systemic discomfort.



Sleep Changes

Restlessness, difficulty settling, or sleeping far more than usual are all worth logging over time.



Routine Changes

Withdrawing from interaction, avoiding favourite spots, or altered toileting habits signal a meaningful shift.



Vocalisation

Increased whining, groaning, or unusual sounds during movement or rest are direct forms of communication.



CHAPTER 4

STRESS & TOUCH

Sensitivity to Touch & Stress Signals

These responses are often dismissed as quirks or personality — they are the animal's way of communicating discomfort. Subtle signs matter most.

1

Touch Sensitivity

Flinching, turning to look, muscle twitching, or moving away when a specific area is touched. Note *where* and *how* consistently it occurs.

2

Dog Stress Signals

Yawning, lip licking, whale eye, flattened ears, or a tucked tail. These are calming signals used to manage their own discomfort or anxiety.

3

Cat Stress Signals

Flattened ears, hiding, over-grooming, or a low crouched posture. Cats are particularly skilled at masking discomfort.



FRAMEWORK

A Simple Observation Framework

Use these four steps as a consistent lens whenever you observe an animal, at home, in clinic, or in care.

- ❏ Always compare to **that animal's own normal baseline** - not a general breed standard or average. Every individual is different.



Look

Posture, symmetry, coat condition, eye brightness, and overall demeanour.



Listen

Breathing sounds, vocalisation, and changes in the animal's usual sounds.



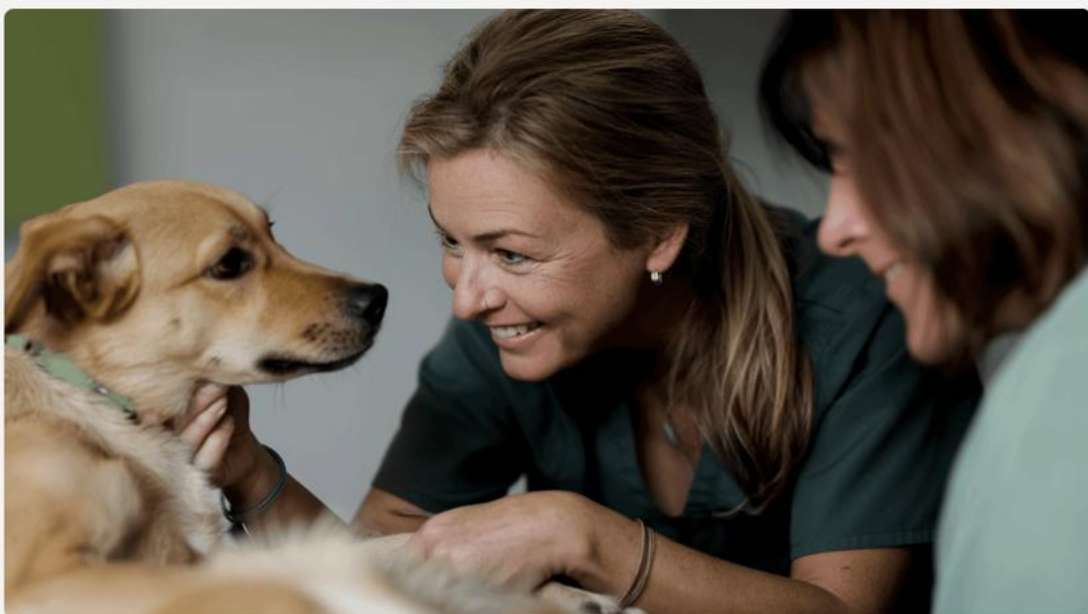
Feel

Temperature differences, muscle tension, swelling, or sensitivity where appropriate.



Compare

Measure against *this* animal's normal — not a generalised expectation.



GUIDANCE

When to Monitor... and When to Call Your Vet

Not every change requires an immediate vet visit, but knowing the thresholds helps you act at the right time.



MONITOR AT HOME

The change is mild and recent. The animal is eating, drinking, and resting normally. Observe closely over 12–24 hours and document what you see.



CONTACT YOUR VET

Symptoms persist beyond **24–48 hours**, are worsening, or are accompanied by loss of appetite, visible swelling, or signs of distress.



SEEK URGENT CARE

Collapse, severe lameness, difficulty breathing, or signs of acute pain. Do not wait. Act immediately.



CHECKLIST

Your Animal Wellness Observation Checklist

Use this checklist daily, after exercise, or whenever you notice a change. A consistent baseline is your most valuable tool.

- ☐ Posture and weight distribution look even and relaxed
 - ☐ Gait is smooth with no shortening, dragging, or hesitation
 - ☐ Appetite and water intake are normal for this animal
 - ☐ Sleep and rest patterns are unchanged
 - ☐ No flinching, avoidance, or sensitivity to touch
 - ☐ Behaviour and engagement are consistent with their baseline
 - ☐ No unusual vocalisations during movement or rest
- ☐ If you tick all seven, your animal is likely comfortable and well. If two or more are flagged, refer to the monitoring guidance on the previous card.



- ☐ Animal Wellness Academy courses are designed for both dedicated pet owners and animal professionals who want practical, credible skills to care for animals with greater confidence.

Ready to Go Deeper?

Heal with Knowledge, Care with Confidence.

This guide helps you recognise when something may have changed.

Animal Wellness Academy helps you build the practical skills to know what to do next.

AWA offers vet-led and expert-led training for pet owners, vet nurses, groomers, carers, and animal professionals who want to support animals with greater knowledge, skill, and confidence.

Learn through flexible online modules, then bring your knowledge into practice through guided, hands-on training.

Explore courses in:

- Canine Rehabilitation
- Animal Acupuncture
- Animal First Aid
- Calm 'Dog First' Grooming
- Animal Massage



FOR PET OWNERS

Learn to notice changes earlier, support your animal more confidently, and communicate clearly with your veterinary team.

FOR ANIMAL PROFESSIONALS

Build credible practical skills, deepen the care you provide, and expand the value you offer the animals and people you work with.

This guide helps you notice the signs. Animal Wellness Academy teaches you how to respond with skill and confidence.

Visit [Animal Wellness Academy](#) to find your next step today →