

10 Subtle Signs of Pain In Dogs

A guide for Veterinarian's to help identify when a dog is in pain

BY EMMA FRETWELL



THE
RENAL
CENTRE



Hello and Welcome!

I qualified as a Chiropractor way back in 2000, and have worked in the canine field ever since: a fellow of the Royal College of Chiropractors, currently chair of the Animal Faculty, and previously representing Team GB Agility in her role as Team Chiropractor.

Incorporating chiropractic, physiotherapy, rehabilitation, and electrotherapy into the plan for the individual dog in front of her, I now co-own The Renew Centre which is dedicated to Specialist Diagnosis and Treatment of Dogs. My skillset is injury detection as well as injury prevention and I want to share these tips with you so we can try and spot the subtle signs of pain and prevent further injury to dogs.

Emma

Dogs are stoical creatures and tend to mask their pain. They will silently bear their pain and only show subtle signs. A pain that goes by undetected or untreated can lead to far more wide-reaching health consequences. Therefore as owners we need to keep a very close eye on our dogs to spot if they are in pain.

Signs of Pain

Lameness

There are the obvious pains like limping & changes in movement patterns.

Vocalising

whimpering, crying, whining, groaning, grunting.

Changes in activities of daily living

pacing about, restlessness, difficulty getting comfortable in bed, shifting positions frequently, reluctant to get on furniture or their bed, decrease in energy and endurance at his usual walk or play time, getting in and out of the car becomes difficult, and they may struggle to walk on slippery floor surfaces that used to be ok for them.

Changes in daily habits

not wanting to interact with family or other dogs, taking themselves off to a different room to sleep/rest, an increase or decrease in drinking or eating, change in sleeping patterns – some painful dogs sleep more, others sleep less. Some dogs may have lapses in being clean in the house due to pain on rising to get outside, or pain when crouching to urinate or defecate.

Self-mutilation

some dogs may lick or chew at painful areas, even to the point of breaking the skin and causing some serious wounds. They will first stain the coat with the saliva, then remove hair and then damage the skin. Many dogs will lick and chew at limbs even when there is no wound to see – this is often likened to reacting to tingling or pins and needles and other neuropathic pain, we can say to people that have this to shake it out or move around a bit to try to help, but the dogs feel it as an army of ants over the skin that they must get rid of.



Changes in facial expressions

Painful dogs will often pant even when the room is cool, with a grimace expression on their face, they may be vacant expressions and staring off into space, they may be a startled look about them. Other dogs may look they are half asleep with their eyelids half closed – probably due to a lack of sleep due to pain levels. They could also have dilated pupils, ears are flat against the head, or a furrowed brow.

Uncharacteristic aggression

Dogs who have previously been very friendly and gentle may begin to act completely out of character because of the pain levels they are experiencing. They may flinch from light touch or brushing your fingertips over the body. They may growl when people or other dogs in the household approach him, and he may thrash and bite if handled. They may resent being brushed or combed, and may appear to have a very defensive posture when simply lounging around the house, watching carefully what is happening around him in order to avoid painful encounters. This also occurs when out on a walk, you may see a difference in his aggression levels when other dogs approach them.

Changes in Posture

They could be hunched with spinal pain or abdominal pain, they could be in a prayer position (downward dog pose in yoga) where the chest and elbows are on the floor, with the hind legs still stood, this normally shows severe abdominal pain in a dog. They can also try to hide in the back of the cage or bed, or in the corner of the room. They may also show twitching of muscles and flinching.

Poor performance

Many of our sports dogs will show a change in working ability, change in speed or strength, inability to perform certain tasks, displacement behaviour at training or competition, gait change or a slight hop on circles, inability to concentrate, and slow to learn certain commands. These are all areas that the dogs are struggling, and if any one of these are apparent, then it is very wise to get the dog checked by a sports veterinary professional.

Flinching when being touched

Often when looking for a stroke, pat, or affection, the dog may flinch and twitch, this could be a sign of pain in that region, and dogs will often get up and move away.



I hope this guide helps you identify any potential signs of pain.

Please find the details below if you need any further assistance or support.

Emma



Do You Need More Help?

If you have any questions or queries that you would like to discuss, please don't hesitate to contact us:

The Renew Centre, 01452767735,
therenewcentre@gmail.com, or on the website:

<https://www.renewcentre.co.uk>.

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