

Specialist Referral Service
Willows Information Sheets

Chronic pain management



What is chronic pain and how can we manage it?

Chronic pain is a common ailment in people and occurs in animals as well. Chronic inflammation of joints is common, eventually resulting in swelling and pain which can persist for months or even years. In order to better manage these animals, Willows has established a clinic specifically to help reduce the level of pain felt in these animals and, where possible, abolish it for good.

What are the most common causes of chronic pain?

- Sore joints (hips and knees in particular) and muscles
- Trapped nerves (e.g. Chiari-like malformation and intervertebral disc prolapse)
- Pain associated with cancer
- Pain associated with chronic GI disease e.g. inflammatory bowel disease and pancreatitis.

What are the signs of chronic pain?

Signs can be subtle, and cats in particular may try to 'hide' their soreness.

Behavioural

- Change in level of interaction with other animals and family members
- Dogs may not be keen to 'play' or appear to be 'grumpy' with other dogs
- Conversely, dogs may be more 'clingy' and seek out owner attention more than normal.

Locomotor

- Stiffness when lying down or getting up from rest
- Struggling to keep up on the usual walk.

Neuropathic

- Avoidance of physical contact e.g. being stroked.

How is it diagnosed?

Unfortunately, animals cannot tell us where or how badly it hurts. We rely on diagnosis of disease associated with chronic pain e.g. degenerative joint disease and disc disease or chronic pancreatitis to raise suspicion. Additionally, physical examination of sore animals often results in pain 'hot spots' which are routinely monitored at follow-up consultations to help assess/alter the pain treatments.

What are the treatments available?

Management of chronic pain is primarily through administration of painkillers specific to the level of pain experienced by each animal. Additionally, the use of therapies such as acupuncture and/or physiotherapy may be employed where appropriate.



1 year old Daschund with osteoarthritis of the hip falling asleep whilst undergoing acupuncture

What can I expect if my pet is treated for chronic pain?

First consultation:

During the first consultation, where applicable, the first acupuncture session will be performed. This has been associated with drowsiness and your pet may have an abnormally long sleep the same night.

First month:

Acupuncture as a treatment may take a number of sessions to achieve its full pain alleviating potential. It is recommended that four weekly sessions be performed during which time your pet will show consistent improvement and return of normal function. After four weeks, the period between follow-up consultations will be extended and may be once every 4-6 weeks.

Long term management:

The aim of chronic pain management is to improve the quality of life of each animal, allowing them and their owners to enjoy all the fun of daily living. During initial consultation, the concerns and aims you have for your pet will be outlined and a plan constructed to achieve these. Follow-up consultations will help gauge the success of the treatment plan and prompt changes where or when applicable.

Why should I bring my pet to Willows for chronic pain management?

At Willows, your pet will be assessed and treated by a European and RCVS Specialist in Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia.

All treatment options will be fully discussed with you during your consultation, allowing you to make the best decision for your pet. The treatment plan will be tailored to your pet's needs using on-site physiotherapy and acupuncture in addition to oral medication to ensure the best possible outcome for your pet.

If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

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