**aRTHRITIS - Information for owners.**

Arthritis is when joints become damaged and painful to move. Arthritis is very common in cats, especially over the age of 10 years, but can happen to younger cats too. The cause can be due to a range of reasons:

* Age (known as osteoarthritis or degenerative joint disease)
* Post injury
* Post surgery
* Infection
* General wear and tear

Arthritis is often noticed as the cat is ‘slowing down’, perhaps moving around less, jumping less or avoiding painful activities such as jumping up onto furniture or over fences etc. Because cats are very good at covering up injury or illness their arthritis is sometimes hard to detect. Cats will often try to carry on as usual so it may be something more subtle such as noticing that they aren’t grooming their coat in certain areas that are harder to reach, they may struggle to get in and out of a litter tray or may just be a bit grumpy or stiff when walking. You may notice that these symptoms are more obvious during winter months when the weather is colder.

Arthritis is usually diagnosed by an Xray but depending on symptoms the vet may be able to diagnose by examination.

Treatment can be sometimes just with supplements that are often added to the cat’s usual food but treatment is also sometimes with medication, such as anti-inflammatory drugs. The treatment will depend on the severity of the arthritis. Arthritis tends to get worse over time so it may be that stronger medication is started until later after diagnosis.

Anti-inflammatory medication, like many medications, can have side effects. The treatment for arthritis tends to be permanent so may be that check-ups and potentially blood tests are needed every 6 or 12 months to monitor how the cat’s kidneys are coping with the treatment. These check-ups, blood tests and prescriptions are covered under our part foster scheme offered at Chichester Vets.

However, If your cat is only on a supplement that is regularly available e.g. Yumove, we ask that this is bought by yourself as it is non-prescription and regular vet check-ups are not necessary.

There are things you can do to help your arthritic cat at home. For example; making sure that everything is accessible for the cat e.g. a litter tray with lower sides, sometimes little steps can be helpful so your cat doesn’t have to jump on high to reach places that they would usually go on, making sure they have a comfortable place to sleep and keeping their weight within a healthy range. An overweight cat will have extra pressure on their joints which will make them more painful when moving.

All this being said, providing your cat is kept comfortable with necessary supplements or medication and in a comfortable environment, although this condition cannot be cured, your cat can still have a good quality of life and live to fully life expectancy.

Any further questions, please do ask the animal care team, or contact us.

Being or previously been treated for this condition may or may not affect your pet insurance. The rescue centre is not able to be responsible for what pet insurance companies will cover.