

Ten Signs of Arthritis in Dogs You May Not Know About

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Arms of Aloha - Hospice and Pain Management for Pets

1. **Stiffness upon rising.** Many arthritic dogs appear to experience more pain and stiffness after a long rest. Once the joints are “warmed up,” they move around much more easily.
2. **Changes in social behaviors.** Some dogs, when they don’t feel well, seek out extra attention and reassurance from their owners. Others withdraw and don’t interact with people or other pets as much. It’s a red flag when you notice a change from how they were before.
3. **“Slowing down.”** We expect our pets to be less active as they age. That is absolutely true, but it can be hard to distinguish between normal “aging” and decreased activity due to chronic pain.
4. **Trouble getting into the car.** Big dogs who used to jump into the backseat or hatch without a problem may hesitate or wait for your help.
5. **Aggression.** Many things can cause aggression, but whenever aggression is increased, or happens in circumstances where it did not before, the first job is to rule out a medical condition. Many owners report their “grumpy old dog” became much more pleasant after extraction of diseased teeth! Arthritis pain can have a similar effect.
6. **Avoiding previously enjoyed activities.** Is your dog reluctant to go for a walk, doesn’t act as excited, or wants to quit sooner? Has he become too “lazy” to chase the ball or lost interest in toys? It could be that pain is making these activities less appealing or even intolerable.

7. **Difficulty lying down.** The act of getting down into a lying position, or rising from it, can put strain on the joints of larger dogs especially. If your dog seems to be taking a long time to find just the right spot and settle, it could be due to joint pain.
8. **Sleeping more.** Pets definitely spend more time sleeping as they age, but if you notice a dramatic increase in a short period of time, it may be pain or maybe even boredom or depression from not being able to do some of the previously mentioned activities.
9. **Sleeping in a new location.** This is most often due to the fact that the old location was a couch or bed that the dog can no longer get himself up onto. It may be inconvenient to the food and water, the outdoors, or wherever he spends his time when awake. Or the bed itself may have become uncomfortable. Switching to a cot or a thicker bed can make a difference, especially for larger dogs.
10. **Difficulty using stairs.** In Hawaii homes, this often isn't an issue, but it does seem to be one of the earliest signs of arthritis pain. For pets having trouble with stairs, modifications such as ramps or assistance with a sling can be helpful if the stairs cannot be avoided.