



Dr. Kim's feline mews



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Arthritis It affects young Cats too!

Is the COLD WEATHER making your cat FREEZE UP?
Stopped jumping onto the bench? Getting grumpy?

Our feline friends are renowned for their agility, liveness and jumping ability.
Who would need Olympics if cats could compete?

However, new research is showing that cats DO get arthritis, and, like a lot of athletes, can have joint problems from a young age. In fact, **30% of cats have arthritis by the age of three years old! And 90% of cats by 10 years old!**

Once upon a long time ago, when Dr Kim went to University (last century!), cats were not thought to get arthritis unless it was due to Vitamin A excess. Probably for 3 reasons. First, not many cats lived a long time (the average age was only 3 years old). Secondly, no one knew what a cat in pain or with arthritis LOOKED like - it was assumed that moving less, sleeping more and getting grumpy was a NORMAL part of the feline ageing process. And finally, there were no pain relieving drugs that did not kill cats - NSAIDS like aspirin, paracetamol, ibuprofen all destroy various organs in cats (kidneys, liver, stomach lining) and the original morphine medications were too strong and made cats psychotic - so there was no way to see the difference pain relief could make. Pain management in all animals is now a hot topic, and there are some terrific new drugs that make cats feel so much better, they start jumping on the kitchen bench again!

If your cat will not jump more than 1 metre high - or stops and looks, to gather themselves before they do - and has started 'clawing' their way onto the bed instead of that lithe, graceful leap, then no matter what the age, your cat is telling you something - my back or my joints just HURT. If her nails are getting thickened or growing around into the pad - that's arthritis too!

The options for treatment now are broad-ranging and beneficial, and Dr Kim can customise them for your cat's problem and metabolism.

In the early stages, or just as a general supplement, there is **Omega-Joint tablets** - so tasty most cats will eat them straight out of the bowl (truly - cat-tested here!). It is a non-fish source of Omega-3's (we should all be on massive doses of Omega-3's apparently!) and has really enlivened some felines up nicely.

There is also **Hill's Prescription j/d** diet - dried and wet. Very fishy-flavoured (HUGE amounts of fish-based omega-3's) and produces some excellent results. It is a complete diet - so your cat is self-medicating when they eat it!

Dr Kim has also used **Deer Velvet tablets** imported from New Zealand, as a source of organic glucosamine, and they work well especially for cats with a recently damaged joint. **Sasha's Blend** (green lipped mussels) also works for some cats.

Moving up the intensity scale, there is the **Cartrophen injections** - a series of injections once a week for 4 weeks that then keeps cats sup-

ple for up to a year! When it works, it works very well, and if it doesn't, it does no harm. Developed for racehorses to keep them 'on track' our cats can also benefit.

Acupuncture done for us by Dr Barry Nielsen, is a wonderful relief for a lot of cats - about **80% loosen up after one treatment**. Dr Barry uses a slight variation on the traditional acupuncture technique - he injects a small amount of vitamin B12 into the acupuncture points, especially along the spine. He uses a nice light sedation so the cats are relaxed and not worried, plus they get a full massage. Again, when it works the effects last 6 - 12 months, sometimes longer!

However, once the bones really start to grind together, then your feline friend may need medication. Depending on the state of their kidneys, and general health, there are several options. Part of the reason we know so many cats have pain from arthritis, is that there are now several NSAIDS (non-steroidal) medications that do not kill the cat! **Onsior** has been approved for long term use in cats, and **Meloxicam** has even been shown to prolong cat kidney health! There are also opioids (morphine-type) pain relievers such as **tramadol** that don't make cats psycho (we finally got the dose and formulation right!), and even an anticonvulsant **gabapentin** that has analgesic qualities.

Any one, or a combination of these products can help your cat to be once again 'feline fine' and moving more like a cat should!

And don't forget the good old **heat mat** - there are many makes and models around and it does make a difference!

Where do Xrays fit into all this? From masses of work done in people and dogs, it is known that there is no correlation between bony changes seen in Xrays and the amount of pain felt by the person nor relieved by medication. "My pain is not your pain", and there is no standard scale - some people (and cats) really are stoics, and others are very sensitive. It is just part of what makes us all individuals! In general, Dr Kim will ask to Xray your cat if there are lumps on or around the bones of the legs (checking for cancer or bone infection), if Dr Barry wants to check the spine before acupuncture, or if rational medication, administered properly, has no effect as then it usually means something unusual is going on.

Again, it is the same principle as for any 'sick cat signals' - it is all about **what is different, what has changed**. So if you think your cat is in pain - then **book now to see Dr Kim on 0400 756 331 or 1-800-cat-vet**. Take advantage of the Free Dental Health Checks (for cats under 8 years old) and the excellent value of the Senior Health Checks (\$105 for a full physical, and Kidney check up!). "A visit to Dr Kim in time saves Nine Lives - and heaps of pain!"