



Feline Arthritis

A new tool to manage a hidden condition

By Dr. Helen Beban



Cats are very adept at hiding signs of illness. This is an important survival adaptation for wild cats. Recent studies have led to an increased awareness among veterinarians that signs generally put down to 'old age' can be associated with painful arthritis. This knowledge has led to increased efforts to diagnose and manage feline arthritis. A new therapeutic diet, Hill's® Prescription Diet® j/d® Feline, offers a safe and effective option for managing feline arthritis and improving quality of life for elderly cats.

Prevalent but hidden

Because of their small size, natural agility, tendency to sleep during the day and 'do their own thing' rather than go for walks with their owners, it is difficult to pick up early signs of mobility problems in cats. Recent studies have concluded that osteoarthritis is a common condition in cats,

especially in elderly cats. One study of 491 cats more than a year old, found radiographic signs of arthritis in 22 percent of the x-rays examined.¹ Another study of 218 cats, two months or older, found radiographic evidence of arthritis in 16.5 percent of x-rays examined.² A study of 100 elderly cats (over 12 years of age) revealed radiographic degenerative joint disease in an astounding 90 percent!³

Recognizing signs of arthritis in cats

Arthritis is a painful condition and recognising the often subtle signs and seeking veterinary advice to manage it can slow the progression of this debilitating condition⁴ and improve quality of life for elderly cats.⁵

Lameness is not a common feature of osteoarthritis in cats (occurring in only about 17 percent of cases with

radiographic signs of arthritis).² The most common signs are behavioural changes such as being unwilling to jump as much as they used to, not liking petting as much and sometimes urinating or soiling outside the litter box.⁶ It is very important for owners to be aware of these changes so they can alert their veterinarian to the possibility of this condition.

Signs of osteoarthritis in cats⁶

- Reluctance to jump
- Inability to jump as high as before
- Avoiding human interaction
- Decreased grooming
- Hiding
- Urinating or soiling outside the litter box
- Dislikes being stroked or brushed
- Increased or decreased sleep
- Stiff gait and lameness



A three-way plan

Helping cats with osteoarthritis generally requires a multi-pronged approach that includes lifestyle changes, pharmaceutical therapy and nutritional management.⁷

Lifestyle changes⁷

Encourage cats to exercise by playing, providing toys, allowing opportunities to exercise outdoors or providing climbing frames indoors.

Place food and water bowls and litter trays in places where the pet does not have to jump or climb stairs to reach them. Provide multiple litter trays for elderly cats so they can more easily get to them.

Provide ramps to help cats reach their favourite resting places.

Nutritional management

Address obesity. Obesity is linked to osteoarthritis and treating obesity is an important part of the management of cats with osteoarthritis.⁷

Some cats respond well to a therapeutic diet that has reduced calories, increased soluble fibre (to promote fullness) and increased L-carnitine (to promote fat breakdown). Hill's® Prescription Diet® Feline r/d® (dry form) is clinically proven to reduce body fat by 20 percent in three months.⁸ Other cats respond well to a high protein diet. A clinical study found that 75 percent of overweight cats reached their ideal body weight within 20 weeks on Hill's® Prescription Diet® Feline m/d®, a high protein diet that also has increased L-carnitine, arginine and taurine.⁹

Hill's® Prescription Diet® j/d® Feline for the management of osteoarthritis in cats has recently become available in New Zealand. This fills an important niche in the multimodal management of osteoarthritis in cats.



Benefits of Diet® j/d® Feline

High levels of the omega-3 fatty acid DHA shown to limit cartilage degradation in cats.¹⁰

High total omega-3 fatty acids to control inflammation.

High levels of L-carnitine and controlled calories to help maintain lean muscle mass and maintain weight.

Controlled levels of phosphorus and high levels of omega-3 fatty acids to help maintain renal health in older cats.

Glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate from natural sources to provide the building blocks for healthy cartilage.

Antioxidant formula with vitamins E&C, beta-carotene and selenium to help neutralize free radicals in joints.

Added methionine and manganese, important micronutrients for the body to repair cartilage.

Pharmaceutical treatment

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) provide potent anti-inflammatory action and pain relief in osteoarthritis. These drugs should be used with caution in elderly cats, especially if the cat requires long term treatment.⁶

References

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Summary

Osteoarthritis is a common and important condition in cats. The diagnosis of osteoarthritis is challenging and owner assessment is an important component of diagnosis. Some elderly cats cannot tolerate the pharmaceutical options available.⁶ Hill's Pet Nutrition has responded to the need for options to help arthritic cats by producing the first clinically proven therapeutic diet for cats with arthritis available in New Zealand.

Prescription Diet® Feline j/d® has been clinically tested to interrupt cartilage degradation and clinically proven to help cats be more active in 28 days.¹¹ It is available in both dry and canned forms. It has a 100 percent money back guarantee and is available only from your veterinarian.