

## We Are Thinking About Pain... And How to Prevent it.

### **We started with the assumption that if it would hurt us it will hurt our pets...**

Science has proven that tissue and nerve structures are almost identical in all mammals. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that a painful stimulus to humans will be similarly painful to animals.

### **Next, we trained our staff to recognize and treat pain...**

Our doctors have designed protocols in which pain medication is administered to our patients prior to painful surgical procedures. Giving pain medication early helps to decrease the intensity and duration of pain post-operatively and encourages a more rapid return to a normal behavior and comfort level. It also decreases the depth of anesthesia needed during surgeries, making the use of general anesthesia safer. With some procedures, our doctors may choose to administer more than one pain medication at the same time. These medications are distinctive in their chemical makeup and work in different ways to alleviate different types of pain. When administered simultaneously, they act in tandem to target your pet's pain more completely. Consequently, we are able to give smaller amounts of each pain medication, thus reducing the risk of potential side effects.

Our licensed nurses are specially trained to recognize signs of pain. They monitor the physical symptoms of pain (increased blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, etc...) as well as the more subtle behavioral signs (hunched posture, decreased mobility, decreased interaction with caregivers, etc...). As part of the pain management team, our nurses administer directed doses of pain medication and help alert doctors if they feel more or less pain support is necessary.

Our nursing staff also understands the non-pharmacological ways of decreasing stress and pain. Of course, the basic physical needs of all patients are met; they are kept warm and dry, bodily functions are addressed and nutrition is monitored. But each pet's individual needs are also addressed; animals who like to be held are held as much as possible, extra blankets are provided for those that like to hide, animals who can't groom themselves are bathed and brushed, sore paws are soaked, etc. Gentle handling and compassionate care are used to decrease stress and prevent/treat pain.

### **Finally, we need your help...**

- 1) Your doctor may ask you to come in prior to a scheduled surgery in order to place a "pain patch" on your dog or cat. These patches deliver an even, constant rate of pain medication to your pet for 3-5 days, but may take 24 hours to be fully effective.
- 2) You may be asked to administer a dose of pain medication the morning of your pet's surgery in order to have an anti-inflammatory agent active in your pet prior to the surgery.
- 3) We may ask you to perform non-pharmacological forms of pain control/prevention at home such as warm compressing, cold compressing, soaking wounds, flexing and extending limbs, etc.

### **We want your input.**

Each pet has a unique threshold for and response to pain. You are the best judge of your pet's comfort. Please let us know if you think your pet is uncomfortable so that we can fine-tune his/her pain management plan. Realistically, we may not be able to prevent all pain, but we can try.