

## PAIN CONTROL

The most modern thinking about the importance of pain relief for dogs is that withholding that medication is tantamount to “patient abuse.” It was once believed that dogs who had undergone major traumas and medical procedures must not be really suffering because they did not show outward signs of their distress. However, a dog who experiences a minor trauma (like being stepped on or stung) *does* yelp, cry or whine. The difference is that the survival instinct of a pack animal is by necessity to hide serious injury or pain so as not to appear vulnerable or call attention to himself. In the wild, if a dog were to exhibit extreme pain it would make him a target for predators.

It was only a few years ago that pain relief was rarely given to pets after spaying or neutering – or even after a more invasive or complex injury or surgery. It took years for practitioners to realize that the animals were truly suffering, albeit in silence. It may seem incredible now that veterinarians did not recognize that animal needed pain medication – and only recently has there been a consensus that there is no benefit from withholding pain medications and no gain from the dog suffering.

Doctors now know that medication helps animals recover faster and better, while the pain itself causes physiological repercussions. Whether in animals or humans, pain creates physical problems like increased heart rate and respiratory rate, decreased intestinal and urinary function, muscle spasms and depression. By preventing or controlling pain people and animals return to normal body function and activities sooner. With their stress levels lowered, dogs recover faster and return to mobility sooner.