

## Recognize The Myths And Realities Of Canine Pain

### **Hiding pain is an instinct for many dogs.**

Posted: Fri Jul 25 00:00:00 PDT 2003

For many dogs, hiding pain is an instinct. In the wild, an injured animal is viewed as weak and vulnerable, so a dog may go to great lengths to disguise discomfort or suffering. More than 8 million dogs suffer from osteoarthritis and last year veterinarians performed more than 14 million surgeries on dogs according to Pfizer Animal Health, a division of Pfizer that manufactures and markets prescription medicines.

"Pet owners may have been exposed to several myths about canine pain," said Dr. Michael McFarland, DVM and director of the Pfizer animal health sedation and pain management team. "Talking with your veterinarian and educating yourself about canine pain management is the first step to helping your dog," Dr. McFarland said. He explained the reality of some common canine pain myths.

**Myth 1** Dogs feel pain differently than humans. Dogs physiologically aren't much different from humans when it comes to pain; we just communicate the discomfort more effectively, McFarland said. Dogs rely on us to identify their signs of discomfort and relieve the pain.

**Myth 2** Dogs tolerate pain better than humans. The reality is that the dog is probably hiding the pain, McFarland explained.

**Myth 3** It's healthy for a dog to feel pain after surgery. It was a long held belief that allowing a pet to feel pain after surgery would keep it still and quiet, but the opposite is true, McFarland said. Dogs in pain will try to stop the hurt, and sometimes that means re-injuring a wound or surgical area.

**Myth 4** Anesthesia and sedation are the same as pain relief. Anesthesia and sedation block a dog's perception to feel pain, but when the dog wakes up from surgery, if it has not been given pain reliever, it will likely be in pain, McFarland said.

There are Food and Drug Administration approved pain relievers for the treatment of canine osteoarthritis and for use before and after soft-tissue and orthopedic surgery. Speak with a veterinarian to find a treatment appropriate for your dog.