

ANIMAL PAIN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Why have we become so pain conscious the past five years? Did it not exist before? How do our animal friends recognize their pain?

Over 400 years ago philosopher Rene Descartes was trying to study the human body but the Catholic Church became upset that he was treading on their turf. So he struck a deal with the Church and from that agreement human existence was divided into two realms: physical body and mental-spiritual. Then at the beginning of the 20th century a psychology researcher, Watson, suggested they (psychologists) “throw off the yoke of consciousness” as it did not behave like objects of “real” science. He also proposed that animal behavior be treated as a simple stimulus-response reaction. Mental states and cognition were nonscientific and, hence, to be ignored. So there we sat for almost 100 years.

The mental state of an animal is directly related to its comfort level. Feelings comprise all of life’s pleasures, displeasures, enjoyments, miseries, and sufferings. For this reason, mental states are the only things in life that truly matter to animals. And pain affects their mental state.

Fortunately people no longer will tolerate animal pain and suffering, the result being many laws and bills relevant to this in all areas of human use have proliferated worldwide. In 1965 the British Brambell Commission stated a wish to see animals live decent lives following which new laws were passed that abolished sow stalls, veal crates, and also required pain control for management procedures. The 1985 federal laboratory animal laws brought to the forefront a moral commitment to give the best possible treatment of animals consonant with biomedical use by mandating pain control, eliminating multiple use, preventing the administration of paralytic agents without anesthetics, and providing enriched environments for those animals in research facilities.

Fifteen years ago, veterinarians believed allowing a post-surgical animal to be in pain would keep it from moving and therefore prevent any further injury. We now know that pain interferes with healing and will prolong recovery time. Other excuses were: young animals feel less pain than older ones, whining or howling are not signs of pain but post-surgical reactions to anesthetics, if an animal eats it must not be in pain, we can bandage over the area so they can’t get to it, therefore analgesics are not needed. But maybe it has also been ignored because veterinarians did not know a great deal about pain management and in the past the options were limited.

In 2001 the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) adopted a position regarding animal pain. They stated; “Historically, empathy and ethics have guided veterinary medicine’s approach to pain management in animals. More recently, interest in pain prevention and control has been heightened because of evidence indicating that unrelieved, acute pain can cause potentially life threatening physiologic effects. Recent advances in the alleviation of animal pain have been substantial. The

availability of improved pharmaceuticals and techniques makes pain control possible and desirable in most animals and in most situations.”

“The AVMA believes that animal pain and suffering are clinically important conditions that adversely affect an animal’s quality of life. Drugs, techniques, or husbandry methods used to prevent and control pain must be tailored to individual animals and should be based, in part, on the species, breed, age, procedure performed, degree of trauma, individual behavioral characteristics, degree of pain, and health status.”

It is now the responsibility of the veterinary profession to reunify the division of the physical body and the animal’s mind, which happened 400 years ago. The concept of mental status must be incorporated into all areas of animal care. Veterinarians must become as well versed in the discomforts of emotional origin as they are in those of physical origin, because from the animal’s point of view, what matters is the unpleasantness of the feelings, whatever the source.

What is optimal for survival is to be free of pain. If you are interested in helping your pet or horse become pain free and want to do this with Alpha-Stim, just give us a call. Midwest Microcurrent at 888-583-0944.