

**SKILLMAN - (214) 887-1400**

1910 Skillman Street  
Dallas, TX 75206

**OAK CLIFF - (214) 939-1600**

1021 Fort Worth Avenue  
Dallas, TX 75208

**WHITE ROCK - (214) 324-1500**

7446 East Grand Avenue  
Dallas, TX 75214

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## FELINE LAMENESS

*Athena Eberle, DVM*

Lameness, or limping, in cats can be caused by a variety of underlying problems. A cat may start to limp in response to an injury, abnormal anatomy, and/or be related to pain. The lameness may be affecting one leg or multiple legs and can be constant or come and go. Although lameness may be easy to spot in a dog, it is not always easy noticing with a cat. Cats are often experts at hiding illnesses and injuries so it may be difficult to notice at first. Common signs of lameness include stiffness, hiding or decreased activity/reluctance to jump, more vocalization than normal, overgrooming of affected limb/area, decreased appetite, swelling of affected limb, refusing to be touched or increased aggression, lethargy, unable to walk, and being unwilling to bear weight on affected limb.

Common causes of lameness:

- Trauma such as fractures, soft tissue injury, lacerations, or dislocation
- Infections or abscess
- Arthritis (see article regarding arthritis in pets)
- Insect bites
- Wounds or infection of the feet or pads
- Cancer of the bone
- Lumbosacral disease or injury to the spine
- Luxating patella (abnormal movement of kneecap out of original location)

To help determine the cause of your cat's lameness, your veterinarian will begin by asking you questions regarding your cat's history followed by a thorough physical exam to try to localize the lameness. Knowing your cat's age is important as there are certain causes that may affect young cats and others that may affect older cats. Often an x-ray is required to look for evidence of fractures or cancer associated with the bone. Other tests may include bloodwork to look for evidence of infection or inflammation, biopsies and tapping the joint to evaluate the fluid. In some instances, referral may be necessary for advanced imaging such as MRI or CT scan with a neurologist.

Treatment depends entirely on the cause of your cat's lameness. If a fracture or dislocation is present, medical vs surgical management may be discussed. Depending on the wound, sedation may be required for a better assessment and cleaning. Medications for pain may be prescribed to help your cat heal. If the exact cause is unknown, a period of exercise restriction combined with anti-inflammatories and pain medications may be helpful to see if the lameness improves.

Some causes of lameness can be avoided like injuries such as being hit by a car or falling from a height by keeping your cat inside. Maintaining your cat at an appropriate weight can help reduce strain on their muscles, bones, and joints. Supplements that contain glucosamine or chondroitin can also help support the joints as your cat ages.

Please contact your veterinarian if you are unsure or notice your cat limping. 