

Hey there, I'm Dr. Christy Long and I'm a small animal veterinarian. I wanted to spend a little bit of time talking with you about the effects of cold weather on our senior pets, our cats and dogs. Cats and dogs that have pre-existing joint disease like osteoarthritis can be especially sensitive to cold weather.

There's a lot of reasons this is a possibility. It could be because the cold decreases the blood flow to the area. Tendons and ligaments and muscles tend to be a little bit tighter in cold weather.

There's just an increased sensitivity in a lot of pets, especially really small ones, to just that cold air. Don't worry though, there's a lot of things we can do to help mitigate that. First of all, what you want to do is partner with your veterinarian to find out, you know, is this truly arthritis? And your veterinarian can do a physical exam and likely also recommend some x-rays to diagnose the joint disease itself.

Because once we know exactly what we're dealing with, then we can move on to choosing the appropriate treatments that'll help your pet feel better. A really standard treatment that we tend to do that's very successful in both cats and dogs is to use NSAIDs or non-steroidal anti inflammatory drugs. There are several choices for those that your veterinarian can guide you to.

Dogs have certain pain relievers, cats have certain pain relievers. Be sure that you always follow your veterinarian's instructions and that you never give your pet human pain relievers because they can be very toxic to both cats and dogs, especially even in the normal quantities that we would take. There are also some interesting medications.

There's a medication called Ataquan that can be in both dogs and cats. Ataquan is an injectable medication. It's usually given once a week over four weeks and then again every month after that.

It can help provide extra lubrication of the joints and increase the building blocks of cartilage. So this is a really highly effective treatment for a lot of pets as well. And then you can also look into using supplements.

Supplements almost never work strictly by themselves. You want to use them in concert with other things. Glucosamine and chondroitin can have some success in pets.

I personally have had a lot more luck with using omega-3 fatty acids in the form of fish oils. So those are all important things to use as something that you use in concert with other therapies. And then you want to think about other strategies too, right? Your pet should be at an ideal weight and so talk to your veterinarian about lowering their weight if they're overweight.

Obviously increased weight puts stress on the joints and causes pain a lot of times or an increase in pain. Sometimes orthopedic bedding can help. This bedding is designed to spread

the pet's body weight out over a bigger surface area and help relieve many chances of pressure sores or pain associated with laying in one position for a long time.

And then finally you can also think about clothes. Sweaters are not just cute in animals. They can often make them a lot more comfortable when the temperatures fall.

So I hope those were some helpful tips for you and I hope you enjoy this winter season.