



Animal Health Review publications bring summaries of the most relevant papers from global veterinary journals to your inbox every issue with commentary from New Zealand experts.

Areas covered include dairy, sheep and beef, and companion animal. Specialist opinions are provided on guidelines, medicines, surgical techniques and papers presented at conferences. Each publication focuses on local clinical significance of the research and all Animal Health Review publications are free to receive.

Animal Health Review makes keeping up to date easy whether you're a veterinarian, specialist veterinarian, a veterinary nurse, or are in a related field. We have selected three article reviews on topics which we see regularly as nurses in practice.

## Development of a behaviour-based measurement tool with defined intervention level for assessing acute pain in cats

Companion Animal Research Review Issue 1 with Nick Cave

**Authors:** Calvo, G. et al.

**Summary:** To develop a composite pain scale tool for assessment of acute pain in cats, words describing pain in cats were grouped into behavioural categories, ranked and prototype tested. A revised composite measure pain scale and numerical rating scale was then tested in 116 cats using two observers before and after analgesia. The mean decrease in the composite measure pain scale and numerical rating scale scores after analgesia were 2.4 (95% CI 1.21-3.6) and

1.9. Changes in the composite measure pain scale and the numerical rating scale were significantly correlated ( $r = 0.8$ ;  $p < 0.0001$ ). An intervention score of  $\geq 4/16$  was determined for the composite measure pain scale (26.7% misclassification) and  $\geq 3/10$  for the numerical rating scale (14.5% misclassification).

**Comment:** Quantifying pain in others is fraught even in human patients, since the experience of pain is a subjective phenomenon. Yet the recognition and alleviation of pain is one of the most funda-

mental duties veterinarians are charged with. Thus, a valid, reliable and easily usable means of assessing pain in animals is essential. These researchers present the validation of a new scoring system in cats, based on the answers to six simple questions about the cat's demeanour and responses to stimuli. Although any experienced cat handler would likely find the scoring system intuitive and obvious, that, in itself, is both the basis of its construction, and a testament to its validity. The author's "psychometric approach" began with surveying the opinions of experienced clinical staff, and thus incorporated the biases and anthropomorphic assumptions of the participants. None-the-less, a similar system was developed for dogs in the same

teaching hospital in Glasgow. In the ensuing decade, over 50 peer-reviewed published studies have utilised the system in pain-related research, giving resounding support. This is the 4th system for scoring pain in cats to have been published in the last decade, but the benefit of having the "Glasgow" moniker, puts it in an esteemed company of widely used clinical scales such that this is likely to become the most used. The scale is simple, quick to use, and would make a worthy addition to hospital walls. Whether it remains a research tool, or garners wider use in general practice remains to be seen.

**Reference:** J Small Anim Pract. 2014;55(12):622-9

<http://www.animalhealthreview.co.nz/an/animal-health-area/Companion-Animal/Companion-Animal/Companion-Animal-Research-Review-Issue-1.aspx>

---