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## Understanding How Cat Owners View Their Cat's Osteoarthritis Pain Builds a Partnership for Success

Article | September 01, 2022 | Jaime Bast, RVET, CCRP, KPA-CTP

### Key takeaways

- Recognizing OA pain in their cats, such as with the Cat OA Checklist, motivates pet owners to seek your advice
- Diagnosing OA pain motivates cat owners to partner with you, while also triggering concern and sadness for their cat
- On-going client communications support effective pain management

Heavy is the hand that holds the carrier.

More than 60% of cats over age 6 years of age, and 90% of cats over 12 years old are affected by feline osteoarthritis (OA).<sup>1</sup> Feline OA is a painful and debilitating condition that is best observed at home. Yet only 8 to 10% of these patients are treated for their pain.<sup>2</sup> To improve the quality of life for this undertreated patient population, it's important to educate clients on how to spot the signs of OA pain early and know when it's time to seek veterinary treatment.

### Recognizing OA Pain in their cats motivates clients to seek your advice

While the cat-owner bond is extremely strong, many clients fail to recognize their cat's pain until signs are severe. Early changes, such as decreased activity or reduced energy, are often monitored, addressed at home (i.e., diet change, environmental management), or considered behavioral or age-related changes. Only more apparent signs (e.g., limping, vocalizing, refusing to jump or use stairs) trigger prompt veterinary scheduling.<sup>3</sup>

However, almost 60% of clients informed about feline OA found the information relevant to their cat, and more than 50% were motivated to see their veterinarian.<sup>4</sup>

When feline OA is a regular part of your cat-client communication—starting at early life visits—you can help ensure an early diagnosis, improve the cat's quality of life, and help bond clients to your practice. Easy-to-use resources from Zoetis, such as the [feline OA checklist](#), email templates, in-clinic materials, and ready-to-share social posts, can effortlessly and effectively engage clients outside the practice, drive appointment traffic, and motivate clients to ask questions and share more about their cat's at-home behavior.

### Diagnosing OA pain motivates cat owners to partner with you

In a study of 200 cat owners, the top reactions to their cat's diagnosis were sadness (45%), concern (34%) and motivated to help their pet (45%).<sup>4</sup>

Consider your client's emotional response when delivering the diagnoses. Create space for their reactions using:

- Empathy
- Concise communication
- Clear action plan
- Reflective listening

Increased feline OA awareness and education accompanied by early diagnosis and intervention may help mitigate or replace negative emotions with hope and acceptance, and help a reluctant client to understand that OA is a painful, abnormal, and—now—manageable condition.

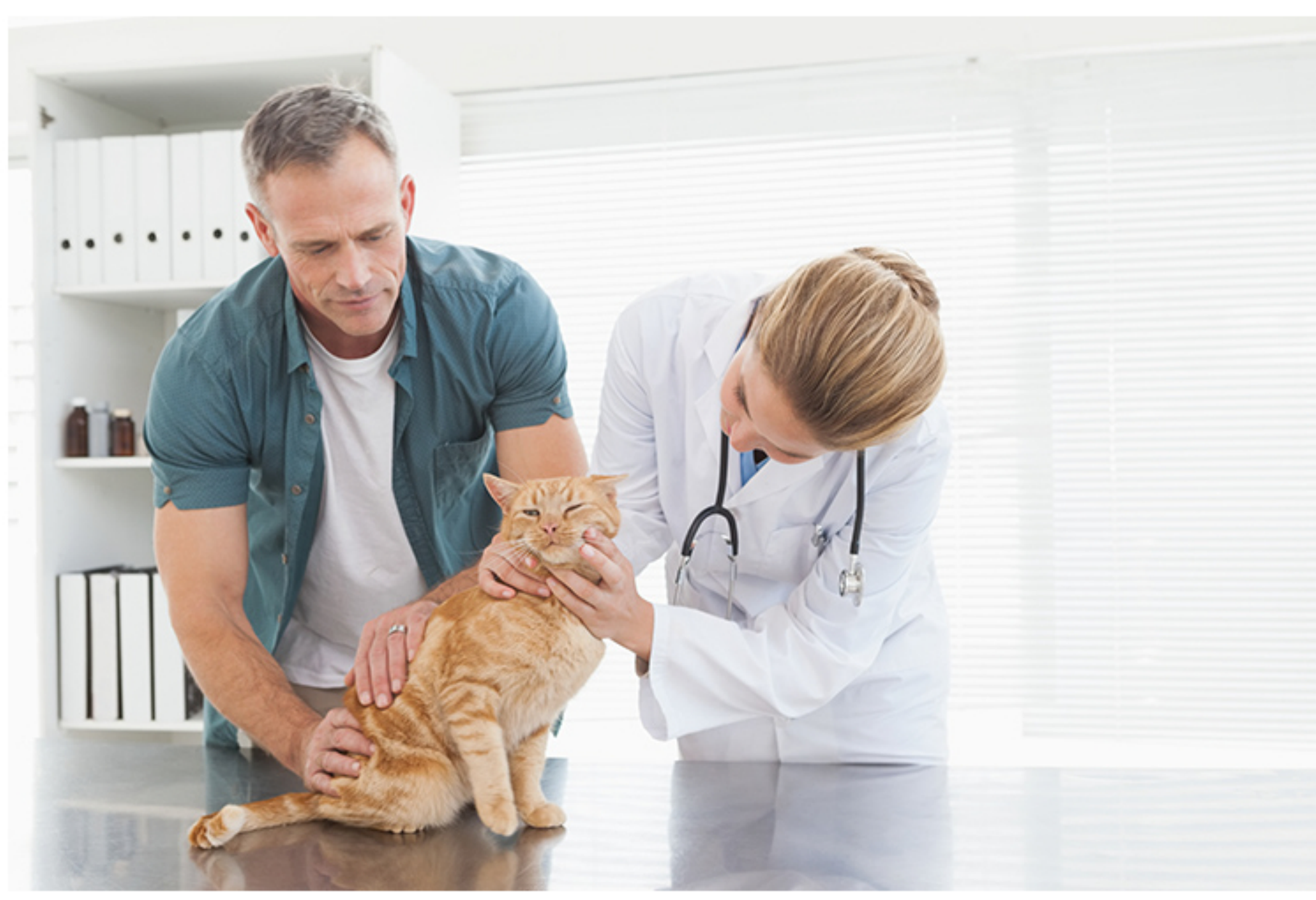
Encourage cat-owning clients to complete the feline OA checklist prior to their visit, and then employ [cat-friendly exam techniques](#) so feline patients will demonstrate OA pain behaviors in the exam room. Underscoring OA checklist results with an in-person observation can help a hesitant client accept the truth about their cat's condition, and a clear, achievable cat arthritis treatment plan can replace sorrow with hope.

### Communicating the care plan—set clients up for long-term success

Explaining feline OA's long-term impact and progression lays the groundwork for a successful treatment plan presentation. Helping clients understand the condition's chronic and progressive nature helps to set realistic ideas about outcome (i.e., not a "one and done" treatment course), improves understanding about a multimodal approach, and underlines the need for appropriate pain control.

Break down the discussion into realistic, achievable goals that include pain control, mobility maintenance, and slowing disease progression, to prevent the client from feeling overwhelmed.

- Address the pain** — Recommend [Solensia](#) (frunevetmab injection), a once-monthly injectable monoclonal antibody therapy for controlling feline OA pain. Solensia eliminates the need for daily medication—a common barrier for many clients.
- Reduce the risks** — If appropriate, discuss supportive measures, such as achieving a healthy weight to reduce joint stress and environmental modifications to minimize physical demand.
- Schedule regular check-ins** — Let the client know that you will maintain regular communication and feedback to ensure their cat's pain is well-managed and the treatment plan is effective.
- Provide supplemental resources** — Send the client home with [printed materials](#), or share [links](#) to relevant articles about [identifying feline pain](#), [adjusting the home environment](#), and reducing feline stress.



### Innovative treatment designed for cats only

Owners will be more receptive to treatment when they understand the realities of feline OA and its negative quality of life impact on their pet. But, historically speaking, cat arthritis management options have been limited, unsafe, and challenging for clients to provide at home.

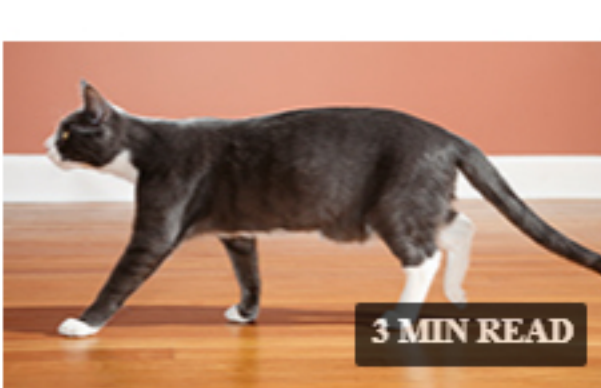


Solensia, a new injectable monoclonal antibody therapy for feline osteoarthritis (OA) pain control, was designed with the patient, client, and caregiver team in mind. With once-a-month dosing, Solensia may reduce the need for multiple medications. Daily administration of oral medications can be stressful, which can damage the special cat-owner bond. And, Solensia is administered in-clinic, which creates a built-in opportunity to check in with the patient and client on a regular basis to ensure success in cat arthritis pain control.

By specifically targeting nerve growth factor (NGF) to control pain—the primary and treatable OA sign—Solensia helps to improve feline mobility, comfort, and wellbeing.<sup>5</sup>

### Partner with clients for improved feline health

To provide the best possible care for cats with OA pain, veterinary teams must emphasize education, awareness, and empathy to clients with cats. By bringing feline OA to the forefront through thought-provoking shareable content, low-stress feline-friendly exams, and interactive tools such as the feline OA checklist, veterinary professionals and cat-owning clients can team up to improve feline quality of life and enhance the uniquely beautiful cat-owner bond.

### Recommended content

 <p><b>Feline Osteoarthritis—What Your Clients Are Not Seeing at Home</b></p> <p>Article   June 01, 2022</p> <p><a href="#">Read article</a></p>	 <p><b>Purr-fecting Your Approach to Feline Wellness Exams</b></p> <p>Podcast</p> <p><a href="#">Listen to podcast</a></p>	 <p><b>Get Ready for Solensia™ (frunevetmab injection)</b></p> <p>Video   August 01, 2022</p> <p><a href="#">Watch video</a></p>
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### Featured product



#### Solensia™ (frunevetmab injection)

Solensia is the first and only once-monthly monoclonal antibody therapy that controls feline osteoarthritis (OA) pain.

[VIEW PRODUCT DETAILS](#)

### Important Safety Information

For use in cats only. Women who are pregnant, trying to conceive or breastfeeding should take extreme care to avoid self-injection. Hypersensitivity reactions, including anaphylaxis, could potentially occur with self-injection. Solensia should not be used in breeding cats or in pregnant or lactating queens. Solensia should not be administered to cats with known hypersensitivity to frunevetmab. The most common adverse events reported in a clinical study were vomiting and injection site pain. See [Full Prescribing Information](#).

#### References

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- Gruen ME, Myers J, Lascelles B. (2021). Efficacy and Safety of an Anti-nerve Growth Factor Antibody (Frunevetmab) for the Treatment of Degenerative Joint Disease-Associated Chronic Pain in Cats: A Multisite Pilot Field Study. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 8, 610028. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2021.610028>

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