

Often times I wonder if people reading this column think that I look at some of these questions and try to think of ways to make the described situations more complicated than they really are. Looking from the outside in, I can see where that thought might cross one's mind however I assure you it is never my intention. There are many times when I feel a decent explanation of possible causes and scenarios associated with some of these described conditions is absolutely warranted and today is no exception.

Pugsley is a ten-year-old male cat living with Angie, her husband and two children. He is an indoor/outdoor cat although lately he has preferred the digs inside the house. Over the past few months, Pugsley has seemed to slow down a bit. He no longer wants to jump up onto the various furniture he has used as his thrones in the past and seldom moves at more than a slow walking pace. Angie wants to know if she can try Pugsley on some aspirin for his arthritis.

First of all, I must caution anyone considering using aspirin to treat anything in our companions. Aspirin is not metabolized by dogs and cats as quickly as it is in humans and can cause multiple problems and even death if given inappropriately. Cats are especially sensitive to this medication. I would almost never use aspirin in cats or dogs.

A second point to consider is what you might be trying to accomplish by using aspirin. Aspirin is a drug in a class called nonsteroidal anti inflammatories and was, in the past, commonly used in humans to treat arthritis pain. Today this class of medications has become filled with many medications trying to compete with each other for a share of this market.

Arthritis is a term we use to describe inflammation in the joints. In Pugsley's case, he may have indeed developed arthritis in one or more of his joints over the years and is "slowing down" as a result. However I would strongly caution against diagnosing arthritis as his problem before I checked for other possible causes.

As described, Pugsley has become reluctant to exercise and I would also consider a cardiovascular problem as a potential cause. A good work-up should be able to discover if there might be a problem with Pugsley's heart. If he actually does have arthritis, we can usually see some telltale signs on radiographs that clue us in to the presence of arthritis. Arthritis itself, inflammation in one or more joints, does not often show itself on a radiograph. However there are secondary changes in the effected joints that will show up thereby allowing the proper diagnosis of arthritis.

If it turns out to be arthritis causing Pugsley's exercise intolerance, there are medications to help. Supplementation with glucosamine/chondroitin sulfate granules are available for cats and can help with arthritis.

As always, let's find out what is causing Pugsley's exercise habits to change and resolve the condition.