

# HOW TO DISTINGUISH PAIN FROM: **TRAINING OR BEHAVIOR ISSUES**

A GUIDE TO DOG BODY LANGUAGE



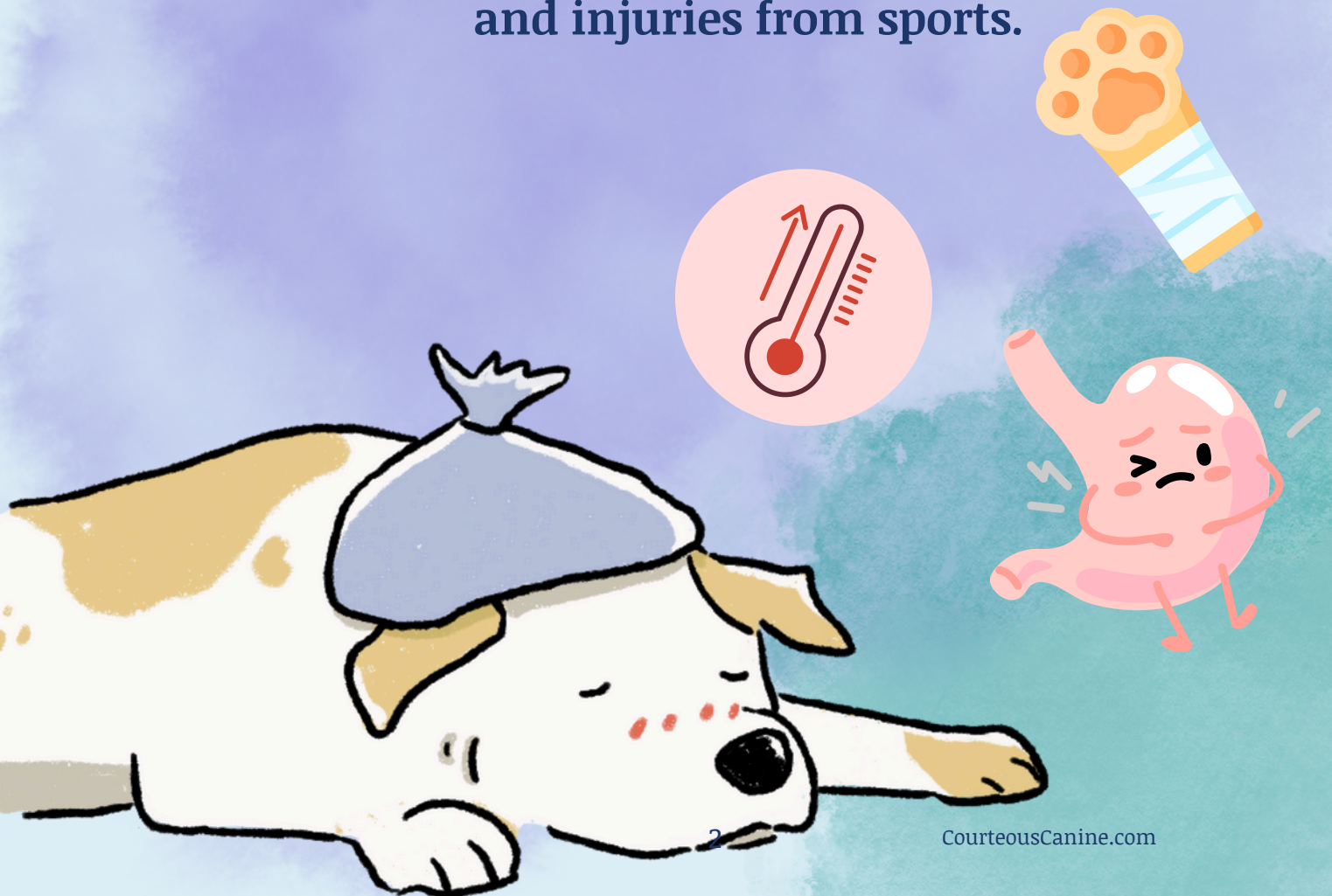
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# Understanding Pain in Dogs

Dogs rarely vocalize pain unless it's severe.

Subtle signs include: decreased activity, reluctance to train, sleeping more, avoiding stairs or jumping, irritability.

Common pain-related conditions: arthritis, muscle strain, dental issues, gastrointestinal discomfort, and injuries from sports.







# Behavior Changes Linked to Pain

Pain can lead to what appears as “disobedience,” anxiety, or aggression.

Dogs may avoid physical contact or previously loved activities.

Refusal of cues—especially in agility or other sports—can signal discomfort.





# Common Pain Sources in Sport Dogs

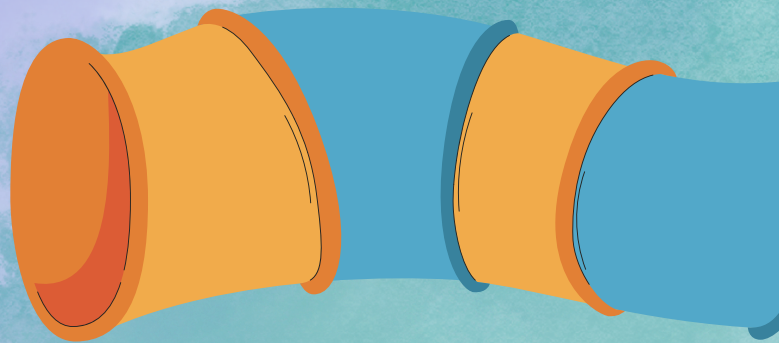
Soft tissue injuries (sprains, strains)

Ill-fitting or harmful gear (poorly fitted harnesses, choke or prong collars)

Poor footing or inappropriate surfaces (if the dog is slipping frequently the footing is unsafe)

Unsafe equipment such as agility or obedience jumps (bars must always be easily displaceable and contact equipment and tunnels need to be regulation)

Overtraining and/or lack of proper warm-up/cool-down  
Undiagnosed joint conditions (hip/elbow dysplasia, arthritis)





## What to Do?

**Always rule out medical causes with a vet visit when behavior suddenly changes.**

**Consider a canine chiropractor, massage therapist, or rehab vet. Get a baseline at a rehab vet so that your dog's normal is established.**

**Reduce training intensity and adjust expectations until cleared. Comply with vet recommendations. Shift to mental training like scent work instead of fast paced sports.**

**Embrace fear-free canine conditioning to prevent injuries.**





# 10 Subtle Signs Your Dog Might Be in Pain

1. Reluctance to Jump or Use Stairs
2. Changes in Posture or Movement
3. Avoiding Touch
4. Uneven Muscle Tone
5. Decreased Interest in Play or Walks
6. Changes in Behavior or Personality
7. Sudden Cue Refusal or Training Issues
8. Unusual Sitting or Lying Positions
9. Licking or Chewing at One Spot
10. Panting or Restlessness When Not Hot or Excited

***Bonus Sign:*** Change in Appetite or Sleep Patterns







# What to Do If You Suspect Pain

If your dog is showing any of these signs—even mildly—it's time to take action:

1. Contact your primary veterinarian to discuss symptoms and rule out any underlying conditions.
2. Ask for a referral to a rehabilitation veterinarian—especially if you suspect a soft tissue issue.

Rehab vets are specially trained to detect subtle pain, muscle imbalances, and orthopedic issues that general exams may miss. They can create a custom plan for pain relief, healing, and safe return to activity.

**Tip:** Many rehab vets offer laser therapy, massage, underwater treadmill therapy, and targeted exercise plans that can truly change a dog's life!

If you need any training or behavior help, we are here for you! Contact us

[LoveDogs@CourteousCanine.com](mailto:LoveDogs@CourteousCanine.com).