

Michelle Vrolijk &  
Viviane Miellet DVM

# PAIN IN DOGS

7 symptoms from  
which you can tell,  
that your dog is in  
pain.



# INTRODUCTION

Seeing your loved ones in pain isn't fun for anyone, and for a dog owner, it is often even more difficult. After all, a person can tell that he is in pain and indicate where it is. As a (young) adult, you can take action yourself, mention it to someone, go to a doctor etc.

## VARIOUS TOOLS

With this e-book, you get a lot of information to see for yourself that something is wrong with your dog. How can you understand that your dog is in pain or has discomfort?



# TABLE OF CONTENT

By reading this e-book you can help and better “understand” your dog. Pain in dogs is often noticed (too) late or misinterpreted. We hope this e-book will give you a deeper understanding and recognition of possible pain in your dog.

**Michelle & Viviane**

**=**

**MV & VM**

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# OF VITAL IMPORTANCE

Pain is unpleasant but vital. When you step into a nail, and it doesn't hurt, you walk on. There is a good chance that you have sustained a life-threatening injury.

Pain makes you react faster, so you can get someone act decisively and adequately. When the nail is out, and it is still painful, you will naturally become more cautious. Moreover, pain is a sensation, which is experienced differently by everyone.

## “DID YOU KNOW?”

Did you know that painkillers, for example after surgery, have been given to animals since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century? People thought that the nervous system of animals and babies was differently "developed".

# PAIN IN ANIMALS

Much has been said and written about pain in humans.

Pain in animals is something that gets attention in the last decades.

In our work, we are confronted daily with pain and physical discomfort in dogs.

Many owners ask how they could have prevented this or could have got an earlier signal.



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# MICHELLE VROLIJK

Michelle Vrolijk accompanies dogs and owners as a behavioural expert. Daily she gets dogs with “undesirable behaviour” in her practice. Throughout her experience, a minimal seventy per cent of the causes are partly due to pain, physical and mental problems.

For this reason, this theme is close to her heart.

Since a dog mostly depends on its owner, Michelle is a strong supporter of knowledge expansion. She regularly gives lectures and workshops. She is an enthusiastic and passionate animal lover, owner of her practice for dogs and humans beings, [MichelleVrolijk.nl](https://michellevrolijk.nl) and co-writer of this e-book. She is also the organiser of the training “Pain in Dogs”.\*<sub>in Dutch</sub>

# VIVIANE MIELLET

Viviane Miellet is a complementary working veterinarian.

In the regular practices, she often came across animals in pain. Some animals were treated well with regular means and methods. For other animals, it was inadequate.

During her research for additional possibilities, she came in contiguity with different treatment methods. Daily she sees animals with discomfort and pain, which is sometimes subtle and sometimes can be clearly perceived.

Through a holistic approach, combining Eastern and Western applications, she experiences that animals are more likely to go through life without pain.

She is the co-owner of the Holistic Veterinary practice [AndereDierenarts.nl](http://AndereDierenarts.nl), with her colleague Tynke de Winkel.

She gives education with Tynke at [VIVITY-Academy.nl](http://VIVITY-Academy.nl) and is co-writer of this e-book.



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# 1. YOUNG & OLD

## YOUNG

Even if a puppy exhibits abnormal behaviour from an early age, that doesn't mean it is normal. For example, look at the way a puppy "poops". What you can observe at an early stage is the attitude, in which this happens.

## PRACTICAL EXAMPLE:

An adult dog is "pedalling peat" with his hind legs while pooping.

He has been doing this since he was a puppy, and it appears that he developed a hernia at the age of two.

Is there any connection between these?



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**MV:**



"My experience is that dogs in pain are more irritable, sometimes in specific situations. Due to back pain, it isn't unthinkable that a dog will be snapping of self-protection, when another dog rushes at him, wants to sniff under his tail or ride on him.

People are then prone to the "unwanted behaviour of the dog" instead of looking at the question "why" the dog snapping and shows this behaviour. In fact, they do not look at the actual issue. "Also, an incident or collision between dogs is often one negative educational moment for all who are involved".

**VM:**

"A hernia is usually not something that occurs suddenly.

The body indicates some time in advance that there is pain/discomfort.

The hernia is then the result of " just a minor annoyance"."





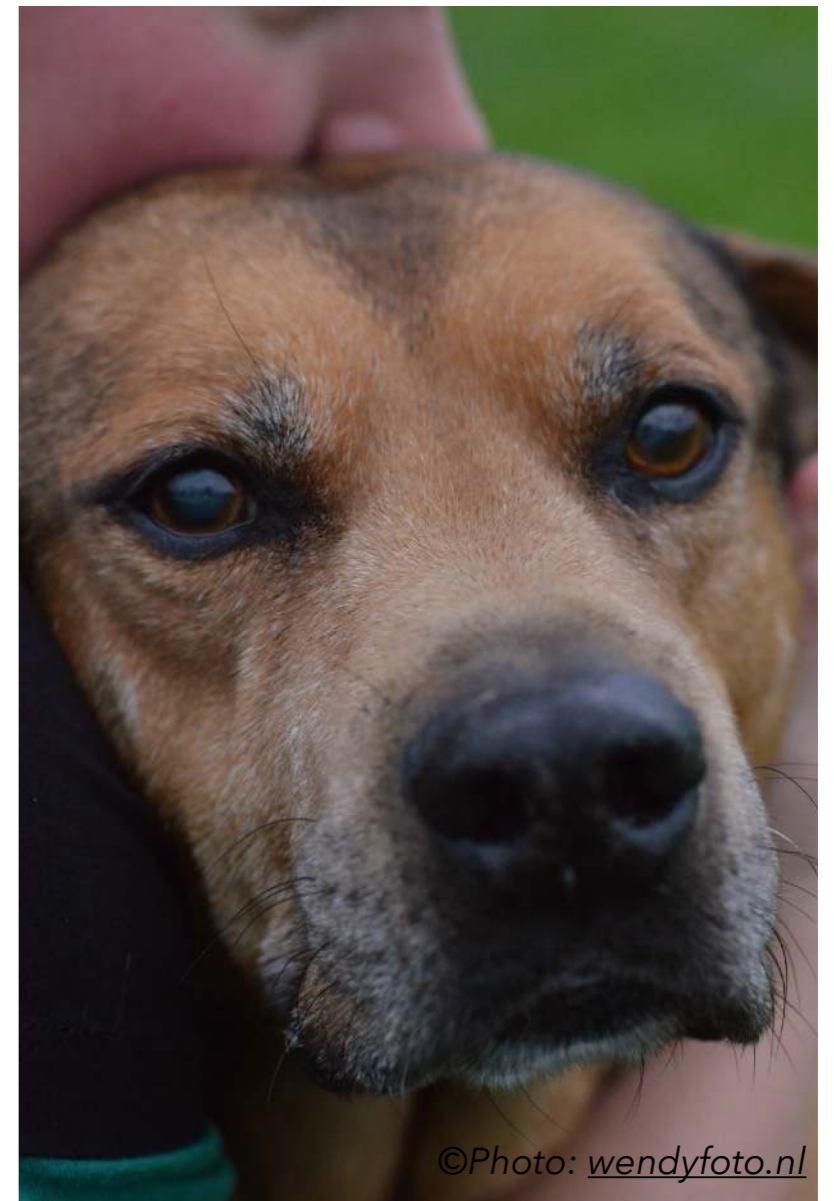
## OLD

Old doesn't just mean stiffer, slower and more tired. Pain can play a huge role.

The dog, who stays behind during a walk, because he needs to find a place to poop. And when he has found a spot, he looks around restlessly.

The old dog is almost in a split position with his hind legs and sinks further and further into this position or poops while walking.

Just a few examples of possible back, knee and/or bowel problems.



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**MV:**

## FIRST SYMPTOM

## PAY ATTENTION TO THE POSTURE DURING POOPING

“People often find it ‘normal’ when an old dog becomes stiff, more tired and sluggish and take it for granted. However, there are several ways to support an old dog physically. You can help your oldie by joining him, stay nearby him for protection, where necessary or desired.

When a dog gets in a split position, as described above, and poops because he can't keep his body upright due to muscle weakness or pain. This also applies, if they can't get up so easy. It seems painful, but also stressful. He may feel extra vulnerable in such a situation or stays behind because pooping takes more time than before. This situation occurs every day and probably several times a day.

Living with an old dog can be difficult because you see his life ending slowly, but it can also be a beautiful and loving process if you guide him properly and know how to keep him ‘going’.”

**VM:**

“Back problems can sometimes cause irritation/pain in the belly area.”

## 2. CHILL ON THE BUTTOCK

When you see that your dog really prefers one side and always hangs on one buttock, for example, then he may be experiencing pain or discomfort on either side. Often from his hips or pelvis.

After all, why is the dog not in balance?

Sometimes you don't even notice it yourself, when someone else points it out to you, because they think it is "funny":

"Your dog seems to be relaxed".

"Yes, that's how he always sits, on one buttock".



# VM:

"Pain can be very subtle, such as a constant light nagging pain or tension in the body.

It may have been caused by acute trauma, which remains a sensitive area.

For example, due to a collision with a pole or another dog. A dog can really experience a lot of acute pain. You might hear just a small noise, see it, shake it off and move on.

That does not mean the pain is over; other things are more important to the dog at that time, such as (the ball, playing, other dogs...),

or the dog doesn't show it clearly, is "hard" on himself.

However, such a collision can be the beginning of (bigger) physical problems, which are then often not detected until later in life.

A veterinarian with additional manual-therapy skills or manual-veterinary-therapist can observe and treat these disorders to prevent the worst."



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# ASYMMETRICAL POSTURES

Now we give the example of sitting, but lying down on the same side all the time or differently (obvious) asymmetrical postures can show discomfort and pain.

Pain does not necessarily have to come only from the skeleton (bones, tendons and joints).

Pain in the belly area (intestines, liver, kidneys, stomach, etc.) can be possible as well.



# MV:

## SECOND SYMPTOM: BEING OUT OF BALANCE - ASYMMETRY IN THE BODY

### “DID YOU KNOW?”

This e-book will be translated into German, French, English, Spanish, Italian and Greek.

“Is your dog right or left oriented?”

For example, a male dog who usually lifts his left or right hind leg when urinating and “is parking in” especially for that.

Also, take a look at the muscle structure of both hind legs and buttocks, and compare them with the forehand.

The uneven wearing down of the nails, and so there are even more examples to think of.”



Michelle Vrolijk provides various trainings about the theme “Pain in Dogs” see: [Opleiding-pijn-bij-honden](#)



### **3. "LOOK ME INTO MY BEAUTIFUL EYES"**

As a dog owner, you know better than anyone how questioning and begging his look can be for that particular piece of meat.

As with humans, you can say that the eyes reflect the soul of the dog. You can think, for example, of dull, bright, staring, vulnerable, introverted, fixating, etc.

MV:



VM:

“A healthy painless dog is a happy stress less dog. Therefore, your dog's gaze should be soft and relaxed.

Remember that pain can be either physical or mental. Pain can also be caused by external signs of the body: such as being locked up, having limited access to water, being bullied, being overworked or receiving little attention.

Also, pain due to the loss of a beloved one is possible, whether it concerns a human being or another animal.”

“Does your dog have “small eyes” and will curl up when it gets a pat over his head? Then this could just be that your dog has a headache. This pain can also come from its neck.”





## THIRD SYMPTOM

## GLANCE IN THE EYES -

## APPEARANCE HEAD

### TIP

Take a picture of your dog every year. From the muzzle, for example. In a relaxed way. Do that every year, again and again, to compare it to previous years. You probably see your dog every day, and it may be gradual, so you will have a nice reference.

*[and nice pictures ;-)]*

Not every reaction from your dog has to mean immediate pain.

So look at the total picture.

Are there more "deviations" and do you see this more often?



# 4. A DOG WITH HUMOR

You know them, in the parking lot of the forest, people who try for half an hour to get their dog back in the car. "Yes, he wants to play a little longer". The game "catch me if you can" 😊. But is that so? Is the walk too short, or is there something else going on? Of course, the car can be scary for the dog, did he jump against the hatch last time or does the car have a strange smell? In those cases, it may have been a "bad" experience or a problem in estimating the jump.



It also may be that the walk was indeed too short. Another possibility is to stay home (alone) for the rest of the day, which is less attractive than what he is doing now. Does he rarely go to the woods, and are the stimuli there super interesting? Furthermore, is he just ecstatic because of the crowds and stimuli there during the walk or in the parking lot?



**MV:** "I have experience with dogs, who don't want to get in the car because jumping hurts. It is also possible that the dog may "hesitate" at the edge of the forest because he knows what is coming."

**VM:** " It can also be possible, that they stare desperately towards the car and feel that they can't make the jump. Another possibility they are too stiff, have too little muscle strength or have not any physical strength."

## A PRACTICE EXAMPLE

**MV:**



“A dog refused to get into the car after a walk in the woods, and the owner thought this was a behavioural problem. On closer inspection, it turned out to be a pain. The dog showed it very clear in several ways. Examination at the veterinarian showed that the dog had back and knee pain.

After a more intensive walk, the dog could not any longer jump into the car. However, this was exactly why the owner thought “he does not want to return home”, but for the walk, it worked.”

Another cause which also occurs, for example (too) little space in the car, making it impossible to lie down.

**VM:**

“Sometimes dogs limp in the beginning, when they get up or start for a walk. Other dogs limp severely, after exercising.

Pain can be very diverse in some cases, touching gives the dog a sense of relief, while in others it causes pain.”

**FOURTH SYMPTOM:**

**CAN'T GET IN THE CAR ANYMORE**



Keep in mind that walking on loose sand can be intensive for the hips and joints. Don't just look at the length of the walk, but also at what the dog does during the walk, in terms of exercise. Does the dog scramble or does he play and exercise?



## 5. 'THE PIRANHA'

The small dog with chattering jaws or the dog pulling his lip up. The piranha who bites the brush. The dog nervously licks your hands at the touch of its paws. The attack on the nail scissors.....

These are all indications that something is going on or has been going on, for example, a non-pleasant experience.

There are also dogs who "have a built-in" "stay away of my body". Not every dog wants to be touched by everyone, just the same with people. Also, tolerating something is very different from finding some pleasant.



# MV:

“Snapping and growling can also happen out of fear and insecurity.

For example: if someone clips the nails of the dog and while doing clipping the nails too short and damage the inside part of the nail (often referred as ‘the quick). This is a very sensitive part of the nail and it may cause a problem for the next time because the dog remembers the pain from last time.



Or the skin was cut during trimming or shampoo got into his eyes while washing. This can result in a restless or snapping dog on the table, even if the negative experience happened only once. At that moment but also for the next time! Then there is a real chance that the hair cut will be a stressful and painful experience and the dog will growl, snap or worse”



## A PRACTICE EXAMPLE

VM:

" It is more common to see middle-aged or older dogs, who all of a sudden snap or growl at the grandchildren or visitors, in the practice.

Those are often the dogs who are being "hard" with themselves and do not show obvious pain. Often the issue is, who put the collar on or even how the collar was used to correct the dog.

Dogs who have suffered from trauma in some way: pulling, falling, colliding, slipping, rolling over, were bitten, etc. After a physical examination, it often appears to be a "displacement" of one or more (neck)vertebrae, which pinches the nerves. This causes the animal to experience chronic pain.

An unexpected touch may cause the dog to be "afraid" that a person can touch the "sensitive area". Be aware of the sensitive spot and sending a "keep away from my body" signal. When the subtle signals are not "read" by the person in question, the dog will indicate his boundaries less subtle and as a result, will growl, snap and bite.

During the veterinarian's examination, the dog may tighten his neck and muscles, his adrenaline rises, and he won't show anything.

Whilst he will indicate the pain with just a subtle touch."



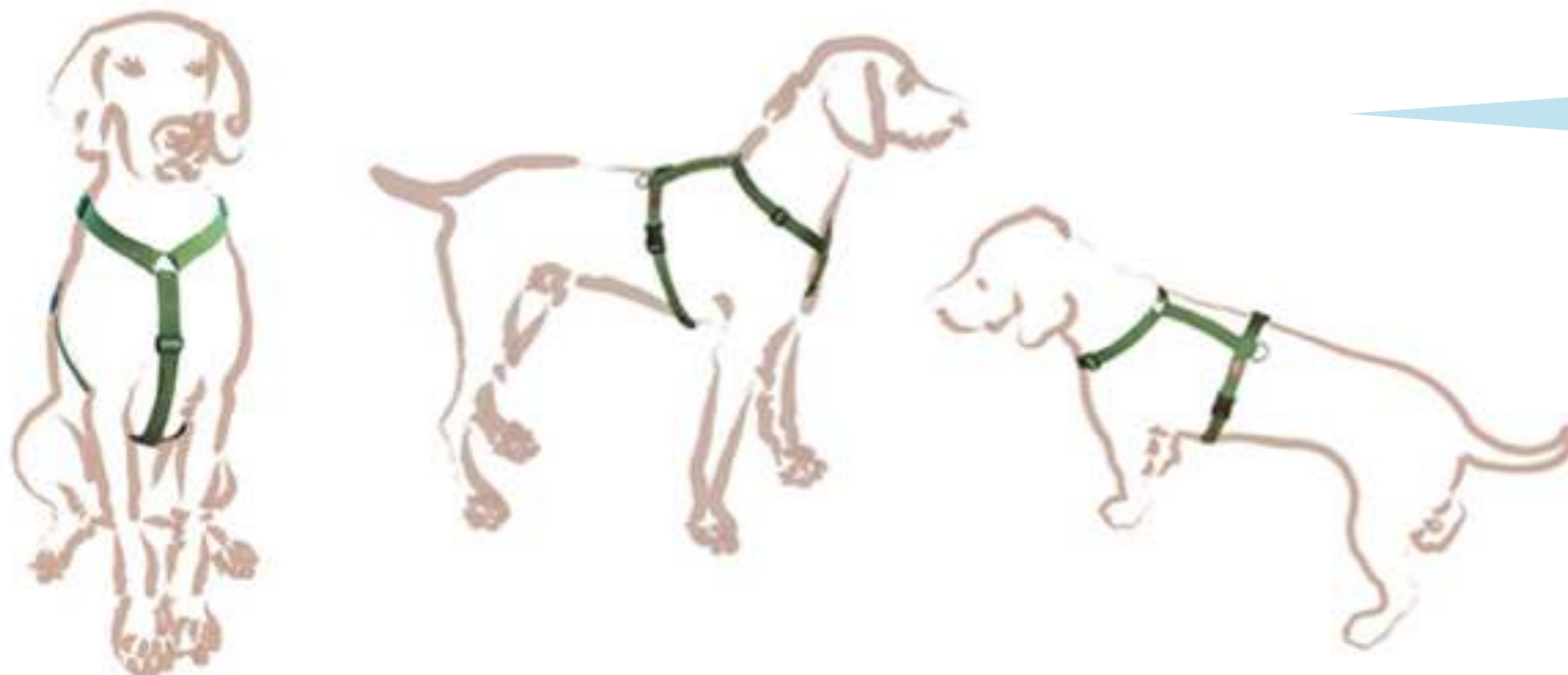
# MV: TIME FOR HARNESS?

“When you have purchased a harness for your dog: introduce it step by step.

Always take it on and off at your **ease**.

Adjust the harness to the dog's size when he is not wearing it.

That is much more pleasant for your dog.”



## “DID YOU KNOW?”

Jerking the lead (by the dog's owner or by the dog himself) might cause chronic irritation and neck injury or displacement of ligaments. The latter can cause problems in the whole body, like increased pressure in the head, decreased nerve signals to the chest, belly, back, entrapment of the thyroid and oesophagus, etc.

# MV:

## TIME FOR HARNESS!!

On this page and above (previous page), you see an example of a well-fitting dog harness from the Italia brand Haqihana, which is among others available at Michelle's.

"It has a Y-shape at the front, allowing the dog's shoulders to be unhindered and to move without pain.

An intermediate space on the back ensures that the harness does not irritate the armpits.

The attachment point for the leash is on the dog's back, so the dog cannot be pulled off balance.

A harness suits almost every dog, but there are always exceptions. There may also be reasons why a harness is uncomfortable for a dog because it puts pressure on a sensitive area or makes him feel trapped.

This can be temporary, but good advice is useful."



# VM:

## FIFTH SYMPTOM:

## SNAPPING AND GROWLING

“Some dogs have "difficulty" with a harness. This can have several reasons. If the harness is put on "too quickly" and the ears were pulled along in the first experience or a leash/eye/clasp has come into eye contact, the dog will be reluctant having the harness on next time.

Also, if the skull, neck, legs, or back are sensitive and the loop goes over the head, the dog may run away from the harness.

Or when the front legs have to be lifted, to put on the harness. Lifting sensitive front legs or moving the weight to the hind legs can be experienced as unpleasant.

When you see the skin on the back of your dog “tremble” by a the first or a light touch, then it means that area is sensitive. So take a good look at your dog; every animal is different.

A custom made/purchased harness is often the most pleasant. In several cases, a harness that you can adjust at all points. As with humans, the size of an animal can change as it grows, or gains or loses weight. One kilogram more or less can have some impact (especially with smaller breeds) if the harness sits comfortably (stays in place).

In other words, a well-fitting harness is a pleasure for dogs and their humans!”





## 5. 'THE CHEERFUL TAIL'

A wagging dog is not necessarily a happy dog. A dog may also wag from the uncertainty of fear. When a dog no longer wags, it can have pain or suffer from tail loss.

Some dogs do not "finish" their wag, you will see a movement that is uneven between left and right. The same goes for a wag where the circle is not complete.

## A PRACTICE EXAMPLE:

**MV:**

**SIXTH SYMPTOM:**

**EVIAN TAIL POSITION**

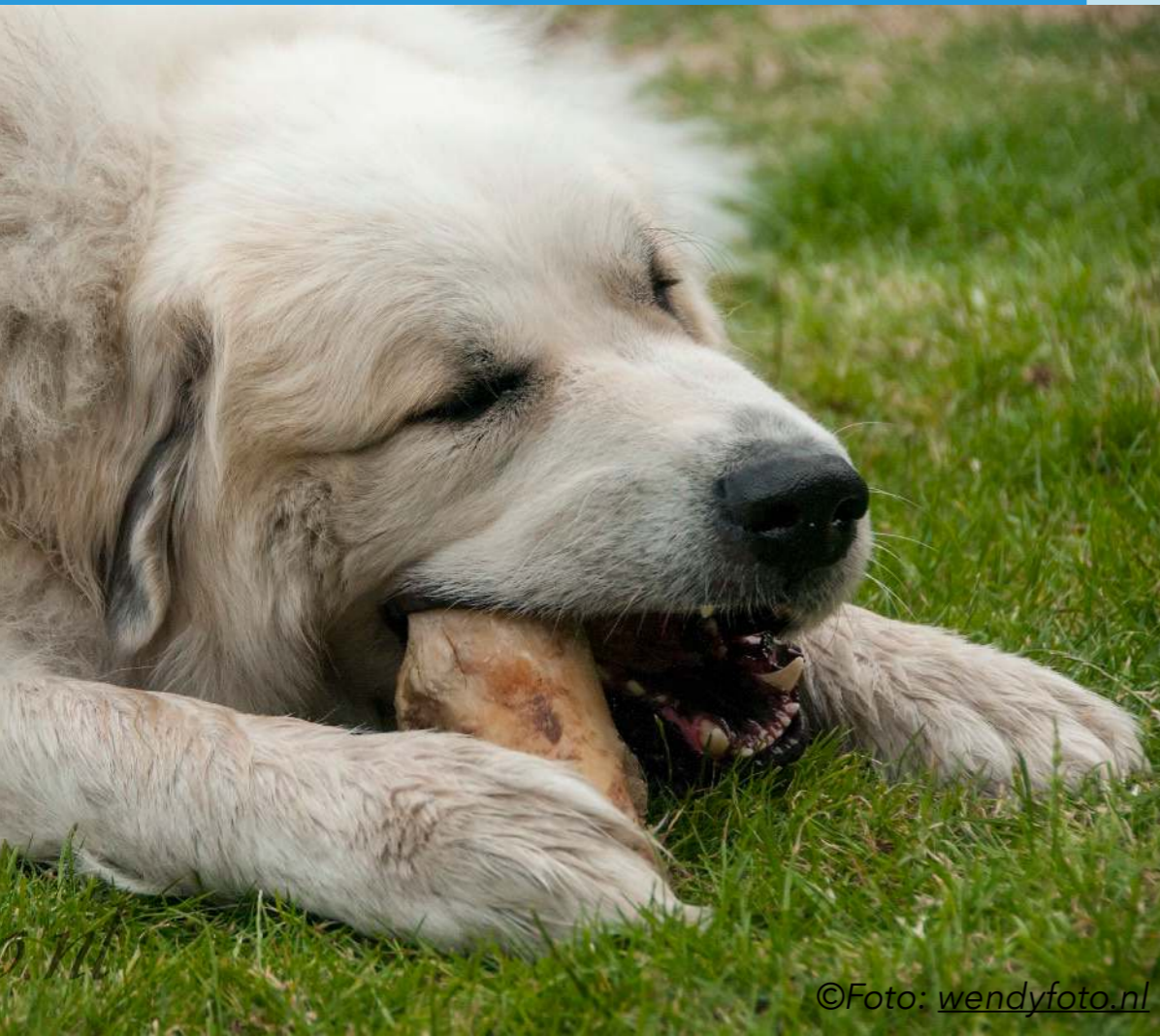
**VM:**

'The well-meant stroll to the market to pick up that tasty bone from the butcher went unfortunately wrong. A passer-by drove with his heavy packed shopping cart right over the tail of the dog....."

"It often appears in our practice, that during the physical examination, the tail bones can't move relatively well. Owners say afterwards that the dog did not 'allowed' them to touch the tail or brush the tail, but haven't linked it to pain or discomfort.

Microtrauma often occurs during the dog's life, which includes touching the tail, and can gradually lead to a sensitive tail. This trauma can expand to stiffness or sensitivity through the back, to the head and the legs.

It may be that your dog is carrying his tail "off-centre" this may be a signal that there is a disability in the movement of the tail base. Then the tail in a resting position is held to the right or left."







## 7. 'WHO IS MAKING THAT PANTING SOUND?'

Panting is a symptom that can have several causes. It's the natural way for dogs to regulate their heat. A dog

can only sweat through the soles of his feet, which doesn't work well on warm surfaces.



## SEVENTH SYMPTOM:

## PANTING

**MV:**

**VM:**

"It can also happen that a dog lies quietly, turns around and starts to breath faster. This displacement may cause pain."

"Pain and discomfort are close together. Look at the total picture (the entire animal) and let yourself be well informed by a professional. Particularly, when the panting "happens" suddenly, it is important to stay alert. To think about what happened.

What your dog ate and, for example, missing socks, gloves or his "missing" toys.

What happened during the walk. Walking together also means keep an eye on each other. Did you play with a stick or did he hear a "beep" during the walk/game?

What other changes did you see on your dog? Have a look at the colour of the mucous membranes in the mouth, the tongue and eyes. Pay extra attention to the abdominal circumference and breathing, if anything has changed. And how does your dog respond to your subtle touch?"



## THERE IS MORE THAN THESE 7 SYMPTOMS!

Have you got a piece of deeper insight information from the above, information you may often overlook?

Many behavioural problems with dogs occur, according to our experience, partly due to unnoticed (physical and mental) pain.

To help you and your dog detect pain at an earlier stage, we have written this e-book.

As we are strong supporters of knowledge development, it is possible to broaden and deepen your knowledge with us.

Do you wish to know more about pain in dogs?

As a loving dog owner, would you like to know more, learn to recognize what is going on with your dog and know what the options are? Take a look at the workshops, lectures and other opportunities which we offer.

[Michelle Vrolijk](#) & [Viviane Miellet](#)



### TIP

Look at the entire animal. The better you get to know your dog's habits, and also his body, the better you can "tell" when something is changing. We can help you with that.

# MICHELLE VROLIJK



©Photo: Maayke Klaver

In addition to puppy coaching, behavioural coaching and tracking lessons on “missing” persons, Michelle Vrolijk also provides regular lectures, workshops and training sessions. Using information, practical examples and extensive video material, cases are highlighted that affect the dog's life and the owner. Participants learn to have a broader look, act differently, foresee problems and understanding consequences. They get a glimpse into their dog's life that makes both their life's change.

The training courses “Pain In Dogs” \*are her latest initiative, which has been received with great enthusiasm. That's the reason why more courses, much more, are to come.

More information can be found on her website [www.michellevrolijk.nl](http://www.michellevrolijk.nl) and Michelle's various Facebook pages..

*\*in Dutch 'Pijn bij honden'*

# VIVIANE MIELLET

In addition to the consultations and treatments in the (veterinary) practice, Viviane Miellet and Tynke de Winkel, provide workshops and courses in 'VIVITY Academy'.

A combination of Eastern & Western medicine and behaviour. About thoughts, emotions, health and the relationship between humans and animals.

Learning to apply this knowledge and developing your healing skills. So you can be healthier and happier together, you and your dog.

More information on how you can work with Tynke and Viviane, to improve your dog's health, can be found on the website's [www.anderedierenarts.nl](http://www.anderedierenarts.nl) and [vivity-academy.nl](http://vivity-academy.nl).

Do you want to have your dog checked by Viviane or Tynke, for physical and "emotional" pain? Just make an appointment online, [www.anderedierenarts.nl/afspraak](http://www.anderedierenarts.nl/afspraak) or by phone.



# WITH DIFFERENT EYES

Now you may look with "other eyes" at your dog and dogs in general. With these 7 symptoms, you will have a good start recognising pain in your dog yourself. See this as a start, there are more possibilities to recognise pain, you can learn this. You will find it very valuable to look at your dog "differently". It will strengthen the bond you have with your dog. He will be grateful to you.

## “PAIN IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED”

**MV:** “Your dog mostly depends on you. So invest in knowledge, it brings so much more.”

**VM:** “ People sometimes ask: “Would he be in pain or say “  
“What a pity that my dog can’t talk”.

Your dog tells a lot, it is up to you to (learn) comprehend and understand his (body) language!”



## EPILOGUE MICHELLE VROLIJK ABOUT HER DOG LEX:

"Lex's influence on my life was huge, he triggered me to start, among others, the training Pain in Dogs. He taught me a lot. He changed my vision of dogs, people and life. Because of him, I continued to learn more about dogs and their behaviour. I have learned to look and think broader.

Therefore, Viviane and I felt that he should not be missing from this book. Even though Lex passed away in 2017, I hope he will indirectly influence the lives of many dogs and humans, just as he has influenced my life. I really couldn't wish for anything more beautiful."

Michelle



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V.E.F.J. Miellet – M.M. Vrolijk

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We would appreciate it if you share our e-book with people around you. We hope in this way to reach more dog lovers and contribute to animal welfare and health. This e-book is intended to be sent in its entirety or downloaded from the website(s).

[www.michellevrolijk.nl](http://www.michellevrolijk.nl)

[www.anderedierenarts.nl](http://www.anderedierenarts.nl)

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