

Pain Assessment in Cats Feline Grimace Scale

The Feline Grimace Scale (FGS) (© Université de Montréal 2019) is a valid, fast, reliable and easy-to-use tool that can help with pain assessment in cats. The FGS Scale can help veterinary surgeons with clinical decisions in pain management, and determine if the administration of analgesics (i.e. pain killers) is required.

The FGS has 5 action units (ear position, orbital tightening, muzzle tension, whiskers change and head position) that can be scored from 0 to 2. The maximum possible score is 10. A total score of 4 or above suggests that the administration of analgesics should be considered, taking into account the physical status of the patient and any other medication previously administered.

The FGS has been developed and validated for acute pain assessment.
If the cat has a chronic condition, the FGS is not reliable.

FOR OWNERS: Always consult your vet for advice before administering any medication to your cat if you think they are in pain. Some pain killers used in humans may kill your cat or cause serious harm.

How to assess a cat

Observe the cat in real-time. Observe the cat awake and undisturbed from a distance for 30 seconds and then score each FGS action unit. If the cat is doing any of the following, wait until they have finished before scoring.

» Grooming » Sleeping » Playing » Eating

Choose the option that is most similar to the cat's appearance.

Instructions for using the scale

Rate each action unit: ears, eyes, muzzle, whiskers and head from 0 to 2.

0 = action unit is absent **1 =** moderate appearance of action unit, or uncertainty over its presence or absence **2 =** obvious appearance of action unit

EAR POSITION

Please tick the option most similar to the cat

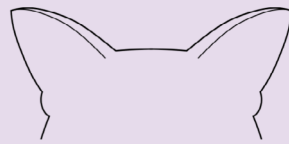
Ears facing forward



absent

0

Ears slightly pulled apart



moderately present or uncertain

1

Ears rotated outwards



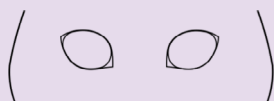
markedly present

2

ORBITAL TIGHTENING

Please tick the option most similar to the cat

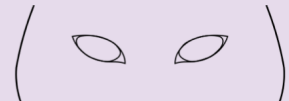
Eyes opened



absent

0

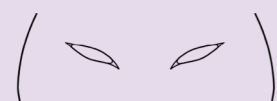
Partially closed eyes



moderately present or uncertain

1

Squinted eyes



markedly present

2

MUZZLE TENSION

Please tick the option most similar to the cat

Relaxed (round shape)



absent

0

Mild tension



moderately present or uncertain

1

Tense (elliptical shape)



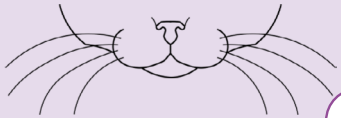
markedly present

2

WHISKERS CHANGE

Please tick the option most similar to the cat

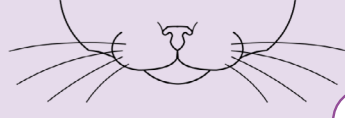
Loose (relaxed) and curved



absent

0

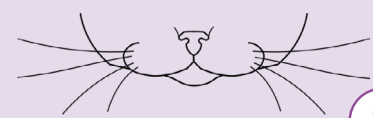
Slightly curved or straight (closer together)



moderately present or uncertain

1

Straight and moving forward (rostrally, away from face)



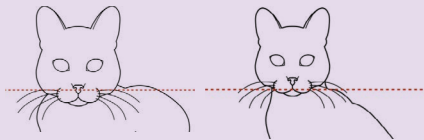
markedly present

2

HEAD POSITION

Please tick the option most similar to the cat

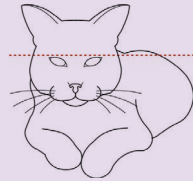
Head above the shoulder line



absent

0

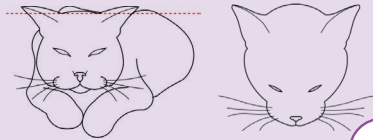
Head aligned with the shoulder line



moderately present or uncertain

1

Head below the shoulder line or tilted down (chin toward the chest)



markedly present

2

Your Scores

See below for score interpretations

Ears	Eyes	Muzzle	Whiskers	Head	Total=
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Name of Cat

Date (dd/mm/yy)

Time of day (hh:mm)

Interpreting Your Score

0 This cat is not in pain. However, if you are a cat owner and you are concerned or think your cat may be in pain, please consult your veterinary surgeon.

1-3 This cat is not in pain or has mild pain. Pain should be reevaluated at regular intervals since FGS scores could increase, and the cat might require analgesics.

This is the cut off for administration of rescue analgesia. Scores above 3 indicate more severe pain.

4-8 This cat is likely to be in pain. This score indicates the need for additional analgesia. This decision should be made by a veterinary surgeon based on clinical judgement, and in consideration of the physical status of the patient and other drugs previously administered. If in doubt, reassess the cat in 10-15 minutes to reconfirm scores. Clinical judgement will differentiate if the FGS scores are high due to pain, rather than other factors such as stress, fear or sedation.

9-10 This cat is likely to be in severe pain. This score indicates the need for additional analgesia. This decision should be made by a veterinary surgeon based on clinical judgement, and in consideration of the physical status of the patient and other drugs previously administered. If in doubt, reassess the cat in 10-15 minutes to reconfirm scores. Clinical judgement will differentiate if the FGS scores are high due to pain, rather than other factors such as stress, fear or sedation.