

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

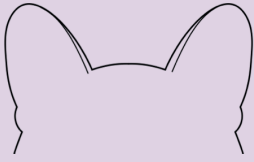
Rate each action unit: ears, eyes, muzzle, whiskers and head from 0 to 2

0 = action unit is absent

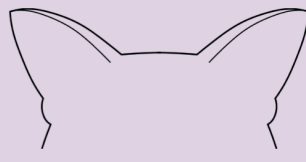
1 = moderate appearance of action unit,
or uncertainty over its presence or absence

2 = obvious appearance of action unit

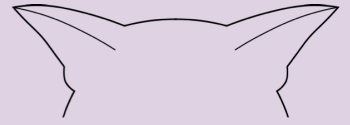
Ear Position



Ears facing forward



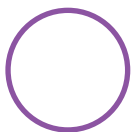
Ears slightly pulled apart



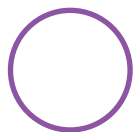
Ears rotated outwards



Please select the option most similar to the cat

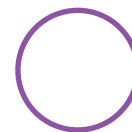


0 absent



1

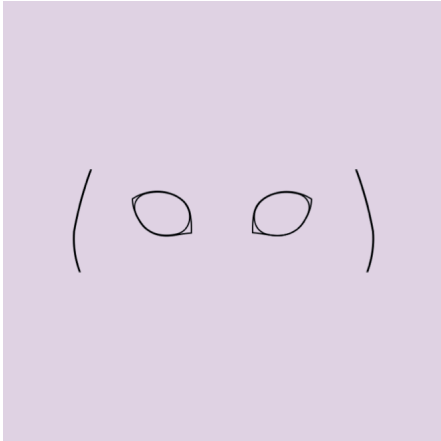
moderately
present
or uncertain



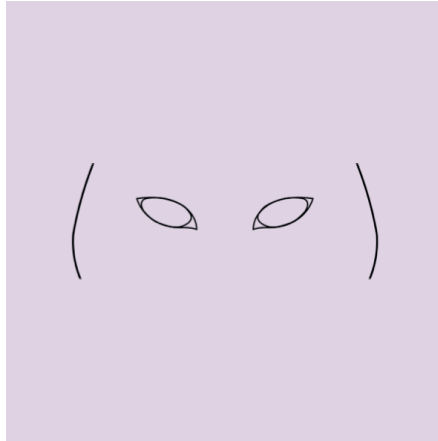
2

markedly
present

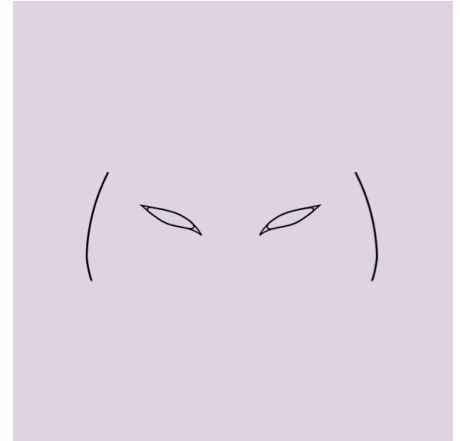
Orbital Tightening



Eyes opened



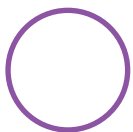
Partially closed eyes



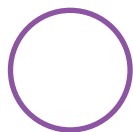
Squinted eyes



Please select the option most similar to the cat

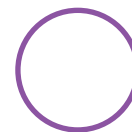


0 absent



1

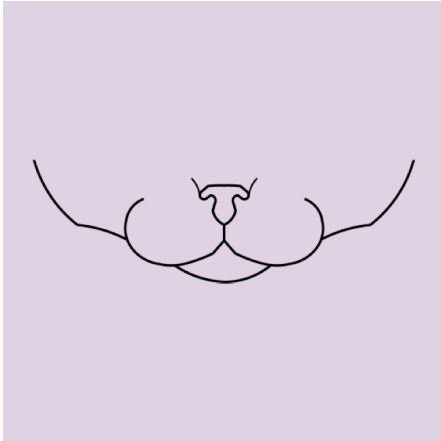
moderately
present
or uncertain



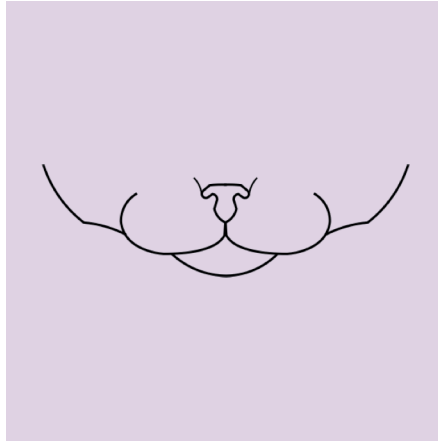
2

markedly
present

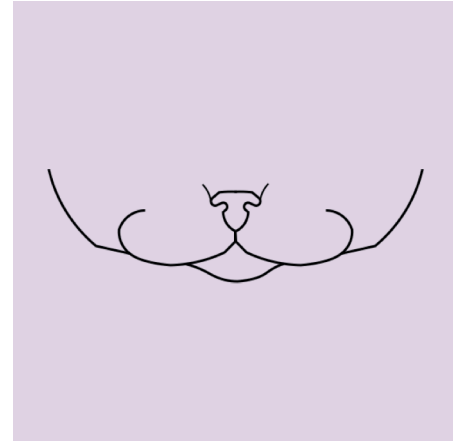
Muzzle Tension



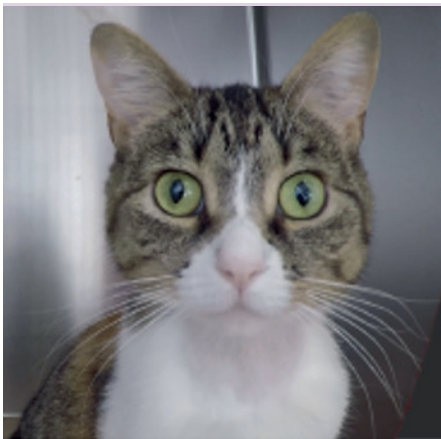
Relaxed (round shape)



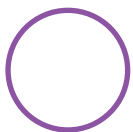
Mild tension



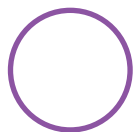
Tense (elliptical shape)



Please select the option most similar to the cat

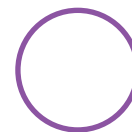


0 absent



1

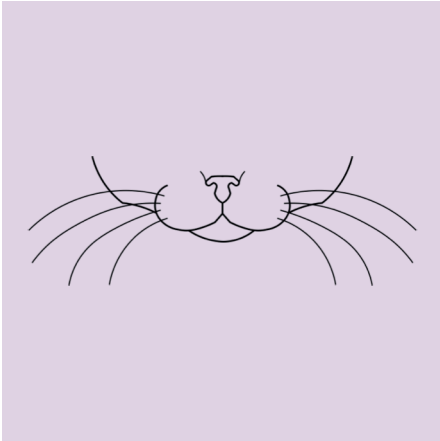
moderately
present
or uncertain



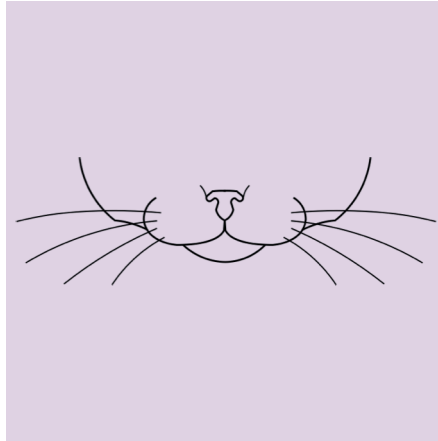
2

markedly
present

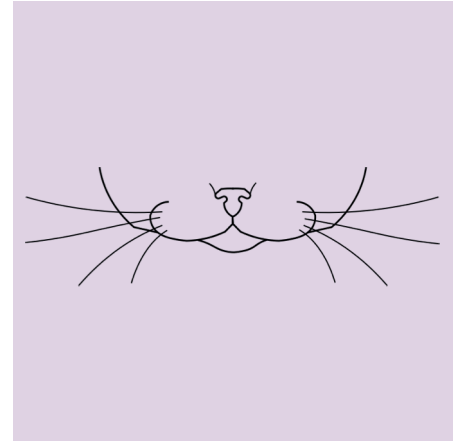
Whiskers Change



**Loose (relaxed)
and curved**



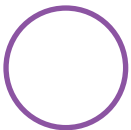
**Slightly curved
or straight
(closer together)**



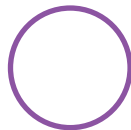
**Straight and moving
forward (rostrally,
away from face)**



Please select the option most similar to the cat

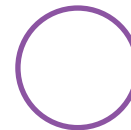


0 absent



1

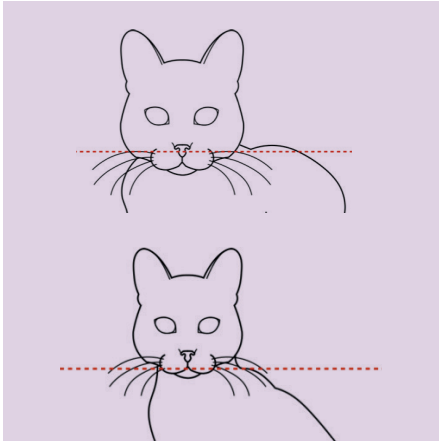
moderately
present
or uncertain



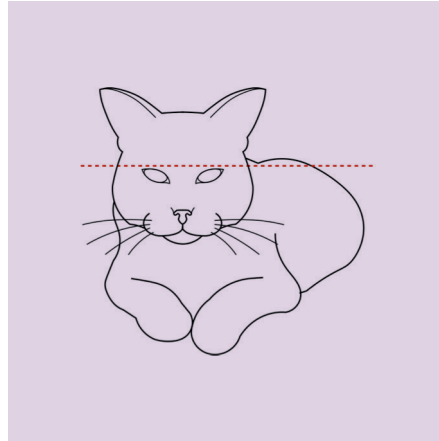
2

markedly
present

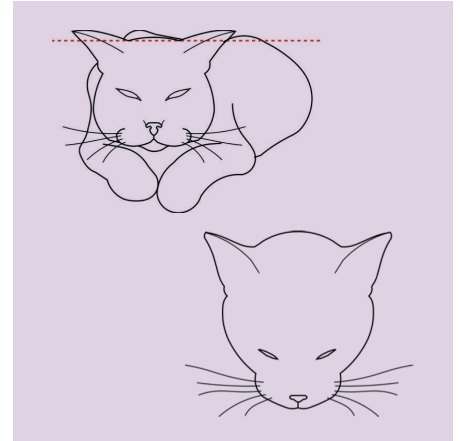
Head Position



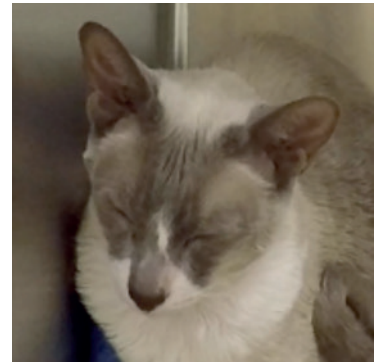
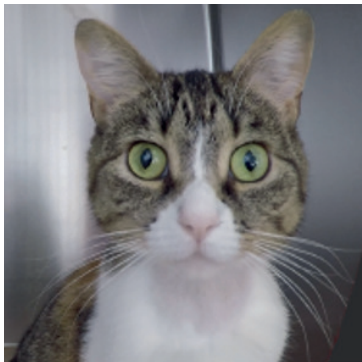
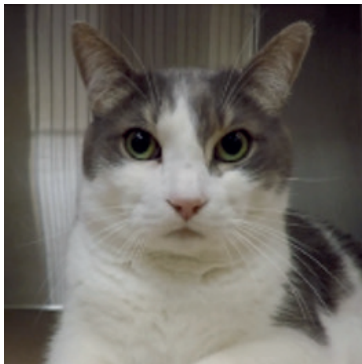
Head above the
shoulder line



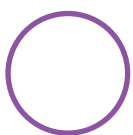
Head aligned with the
shoulder line



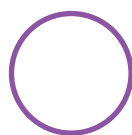
Head below the shoulder
line or tilted down
(chin toward the chest)



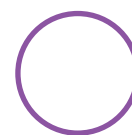
Please select the option most similar to the cat



0 absent



1 moderately
present
or uncertain



2 markedly
present

Your Scores

Ears

Eyes

Muzzle

Whiskers

Head

Total Score



See below for score interpretations

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.