



FIT FOR LIFE

Animal magic

Carol Westmorland has a warm and fuzzy alternative way to get relief from pain

It's a tricky one. Nobody stepped forward to volunteer. Instead, wide eyed in wonderment, they were willing to offer their services but less willing to see whether they were suitable for the necessary job. There was something of a stand-off.

The clever scientists at University College London have been busy conducting research, as scientists do. They have been asked to investigate alternative pain relief.

This interests me. I wanted to know more. One study has concluded that holding a heated object that is about 40 degrees Celsius against an area of pain will have the benefit of reducing the feeling of pain. Heat against the skin, they say, switches on a receptor, called TRPV1, blocking pain signals. They believe it may do this to allow the brain to focus on the injury.

Now, I could have saved them some trouble. They quite rightly needed to give it a decent code name; something I may not have been able to do. I do know that when I have wanted to manage pain I have always found heat works best, and is fast. The only time delay, in my case, is boiling the kettle or filling the bath.

So why the wide-eyed faces? Well, Mischa our gorgeous black Labrador has recently experienced having her temperature taken and had told the others. Both Maisie Mittens and Daisy (my Burmese cats) were less than impressed and Truly Scrumptious (my Cavachon dog) incredulous.

Nobody was therefore willing to see if they met the standard. Of course, I,



'THEY DON'T NEED TOPPED UP TO STAY WARM AND ARE VERY RECEPTIVE'

as a responsible owner, was teasing. I know my facts. The average temperature of a cat is just under 40 degrees Celsius and a dog is also around 40 degrees Celsius. Purrfect. The job is therefore theirs. No awkward business to conduct and on their part a huge sigh of relief.

So if, as an alternative to a hot water bottle or hot bath, you would rather choose an alternative method to reduce pain, I have this as a very good suggestion.

They don't need topped up to stay warm and are very receptive; something a hot water bottle is not. They even gaze back adoringly.

Cuddle up with your cat or snuggle up with your dog. They say having a pet is comforting now we know why.

I would suggest one on your feet and one top end. Bliss.

Carol Westmorland lives in the Eden Valley. She is a Cycling Time Trials national champion, clocking up 445 miles in 24 hours. She also teaches pilates. www.pilates-cumbria.co.uk