

1 **Conceptual and methodological issues relating to pain assessment in mammals: the**
2 **development and utilisation of pain facial expression scales.**

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17 **Abstract**

18 Effective management of pain is critical to the improvement of animal welfare. For this to happen
19 pain must be recognised and assessed in a variety of contexts. Pain is a complex phenomenon, making
20 reliable, valid, and feasible measurement challenging. The use of facial expressions as a technique to
21 assess pain in non-verbal human patients has been widely utilised for many years. More recently this
22 technique has been developed for use in a number of non-human species: rodents, rabbits, ferrets,
23 cats, sheep, pigs and horses. Facial expression scoring has been demonstrated to provide an effective
24 means of identifying animal pain and in assessing its severity, overcoming some of the limitations of
25 other measures for pain assessment in animals. However, there remain limitations and challenges to
26 the use of facial expression as a welfare assessment tool which must be investigated. This paper
27 reviews current facial expression pain scales ("Grimace Scales"), discussing the general conceptual
28 and methodological issues faced when assessing pain, and highlighting the advantages of using facial
29 expression scales over other methods of pain assessment. We provide guidance on how facial
30 expression scales should be developed so as to be valid and reliable, but we also provide guidance on
31 how they should be used in clinical practice.

32 **Key words:** Facial expression, Pain, Welfare, Methods, Clinical practice

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56 **1. Introduction**

57 Understanding, recognising and managing pain in animals is of critical importance to their welfare;
58 however, our current understanding of pain is limited by its complexity, and the subjective nature of
59 the response to pain. Pain assessment is complicated by the involvement of an affective component as
60 well as the sensory nervous component (Broom, 2014). The similarity in structure and function of
61 nervous systems between humans and other mammals, coupled with the similarity in behavioural
62 responses to painful stimuli, provides evidence that non-human animals feel pain, suffering as a result
63 (Broom, 2001). This is not accepted by all in the scientific community, some arguing that conscious
64 awareness of pain is required for suffering to occur which is limited to humans and a small range of
65 other species (Bermond, 2001; Key, 2016). Key (2016) argued the behavioural and physiological
66 responses to painful stimuli observed in animals not possessing a prefrontal cortex should be viewed
67 as simple nociceptive responses, not an indication of the feeling of pain. In order to properly
68 understand the aversive nature of pain and the extent of suffering, both the sensory and affective

69 elements of pain need to be assessed in a validated, reliable manner, that takes a functional rather than
70 anatomical approach to pain (Broom, 2016, 2014, Sneddon et al., 2018, 2014).

71 Facial expressions have long been used to recognise and quantify pain in human patients who are
72 unable to verbalise, such as neonates or patients with verbal or cognitive impairments (Boerner et al.,
73 2013; Prkachin et al., 1994; Prkachin and Solomon, 2008; Schiavenato et al., 2008). Facial
74 expressions have also been demonstrated to encode both the sensory and affective components of pain
75 in humans (Kunz et al., 2012). Langford et al. (2010) were the first to extend this method of assessing
76 pain in humans to a non-human animal, mice. These authors showed facial expressions of mice
77 undergoing a painful experience reduced in a dose dependent manner when provided with analgesics
78 widely considered to be effective. The authors were able to separate the typical sensory response (e.g.
79 writhing) from the emotional response to painful stimulus (facial expression) using an insula lesioning
80 study. The insula is the area of human brain associated with emotional reaction to pain and an area
81 shared by mice. However, further investigation is required into this phenomenon before it can be
82 considered conclusive due to the low sample size employed (n=6) in this later group. These results,
83 and those from Kunz et al. (2012) provide support that facial expression could be key to
84 demonstrating the affective component of pain in animals as well as the nociceptive response.

85 In the last decade, a number of other species have had facial expression scales developed and
86 validated to varying degrees as a pain assessment tool (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani et al.,
87 2016; Glerup et al., 2015; Guesgen et al., 2016; Häger et al., 2017; Holden et al., 2014; Keating et
88 al., 2012; MacRae et al., 2018; McLennan et al., 2016; Reijgwart et al., 2017; Sotocinal et al., 2011;
89 van Loon and VanDierendonck, 2015). For this technique of pain assessment to effectively help us
90 understand pain in animals, we must understand the challenges and limitations to the development and
91 use of facial expression as a pain assessment method.

92 Thus, the aim of this paper is to provide a brief overview of pain as a welfare issue in mammals, and
93 to discuss the conceptual problems that makes the assessment of pain difficult. We will highlight
94 some of the methodological issues associated with standard methods of pain assessment, before

95 discussing the potential of facial expression as a pain assessment tool. A recent review by Descovich
96 and colleagues (2017) argued the underutilisation of facial expression as a welfare assessment tool.
97 Within their review, Descovich et al. (2017) briefly mention the limitations and challenges with the
98 use of facial expression as a welfare assessment tool. It is the purpose of this review to further explore
99 these conceptual and methodological difficulties that are characteristic of a new field further, with
100 specific reference to assessing animal pain. We will discuss some of the current scales that have been
101 developed to assess pain in animals exploring the methodological issues that they have faced. We
102 investigate how the researchers have attempted to overcome the conceptual problems of pain
103 assessment when validating the scales' effectiveness. Additionally, we will highlight the advantages
104 of their use over other more common methods of pain assessment and demonstrate that scales provide
105 an opportunity to further our understanding of pain assessment.

106 We provide a caveat to the future development and utilisation of these scales as a consequence of the
107 issues explored. Accordingly, through our own experience we provide guidance on how these scales
108 should be used in both the clinical and research setting in order to be effective in pain assessment.
109 Progress in animal pain assessment critically relies upon the development of robust and compelling
110 experimental designs (Panksepp, 1998). Thus, we also aim to provide a framework on how these scales
111 should be developed for other species and for other emotional states so they are valid and reliable.

112 **2. Pain in animals remains a welfare issue**

113 Pain is aversive, and left unmitigated can lead to severe stress with detrimental physical and mental
114 effects on an animal causing suffering (Dawkins, 2008; Flecknell et al., 2011). The presence of pain
115 reduces play (Mintline et al., 2013; Rushen and de Passillé, 2012; Thornton and Waterman-Pearson,
116 2002), grooming (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Ellen et al., 2016; Keating et al., 2012), eating (de Oliveira
117 et al., 2014), and disrupts sleep (Andersen and Tufik, 2003; Ohayon, 2005; Schütz et al., 2003).
118 Despite increased awareness of the existence of pain in animals and its detrimental effects on welfare,
119 animals are still subjected to procedures or events in which pain is likely to occur. Routine husbandry
120 procedures in farm animals such as castration and de-horning if carried out with inadequate

121 anaesthesia and analgesia can result in pain (Lomax and Windsor, 2013; Mintline et al., 2013; Stewart
122 et al., 2014, 2007; Walker et al., 2011). Experimental procedures in laboratory animals, and accidental
123 injury, disease or elective surgery in all species are also a source of pain (Abu-Serriah et al., 2007;
124 Matsumiya et al., 2012; Waite et al., 2015). Unmitigated pain may result in pathological changes in
125 physiology and behaviour, increasing variability in data collected and thus decreasing validity of
126 scientific studies (Hawkins, 2014). In farm animals, unmitigated pain reduces the production or
127 growth in farmed animals (e.g. Green et al., 2002) which directly conflicts with the need for increased
128 sustainable food production (Hunter et al., 2017). Pain management in domestic animals is not always
129 provided in an effective manner (Bell et al., 2014; Huxley and Whay, 2006; Norring et al., 2014),
130 resulting in suffering. Such procedures and the resulting negative effects on animal welfare, are a
131 major source of concern for the public (Busch et al., 2017; Doughty et al., 2017; Fredriksen et al.,
132 2011; Robbins et al., 2015; Ventura et al., 2014). Effective assessment and alleviation of pain are
133 closely linked, hence if we cannot effectively identify pain when it occurs or judge its severity, we
134 shall be unable to alleviate it. To understand the obstacles to pain prevention and alleviation, it is
135 necessary to examine our current understanding of pain.

136 *2.1 The anatomy and physiology of pain*

137 Pain involves both sensory and affective components, and is often associated with actual or potential
138 tissue damage (Broom, 2001; IASP, 1994; Sneddon et al., 2014). The sensory aspect of pain refers to
139 nociception, the transmission of information about tissue damage to the brain via peripheral pain
140 receptors (nociceptors), nerve fibres and neurons. Noxious stimuli (mechanical, thermal or chemical)
141 activate free-nerve endings of thinly myelinated A-delta nerve fibres and unmyelinated C fibres
142 producing action potentials which pass via the dorsal root ganglia (DRG) into the spinal cord.
143 Neurons within the dorsal horn are activated, mediating local withdrawal reflexes as well as relaying
144 the signal via ascending afferent pathways in the gray matter of the spinal cord to synapses in the
145 medulla, midbrain and thalamus (Brooks and Tracey, 2005). From these centres, in mammals,
146 neurons transmit the signal to the cortex where the conscious affective experience of pain is
147 considered to occur (Hofbauer et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2009). However, interneurons local to the dorsal

148 horn can modulate the nociceptive signal, and descending pathways from the mid and hind brain can
149 inhibit or facilitate the signals transmission to the brain and spinal cord (Heinricher et al., 2009; White
150 et al., 2018). These changes that occur in the neurobiology of the transmitted signal lead to
151 complications in our understanding of the sensory component of pain. Moreover, they can have a
152 significant impact on the affective experience of pain and the associated suffering (Rainville, 2002).

153 Pain may be either acute or chronic in nature. Acute pain is generally short lived and is mainly caused
154 by pathological damage to tissue or nerves resulting from injury, inflammation or infection (Viñuela-
155 Fernández et al., 2007). Acute pain tends to respond to pain relief as the inflammation and infection
156 are controlled and so does not tend to persist beyond healing (Woller et al., 2017). Chronic pain can
157 extend beyond the healing process (Lavand'homme, 2011; Ley et al., 1989) and is associated with
158 greater emotional distress (Baliki et al., 2006; Seminowicz et al., 2009). Chronic pain can be complex,
159 being multifaceted and sometimes not originating from peripheral nociception, making diagnosis of
160 the underlying cause and thus treatment of chronic pain difficult. Moreover, sustained activation of
161 nociceptors, nerve damage, or neural dysfunction, can cause neuropathic pain, presenting itself as
162 allodynia, hyperalgesia or spontaneous pain (Gear and Levine, 2011; Miki et al., 2002). It is now well
163 accepted in human medicine, that chronic pain can be a disease in itself and does not need to be
164 associated with another physical disease or injury (Apkarian and Scholz, 2006; Groh et al., 2017;
165 Tracey and Bushnell, 2009).

166 2.2. *The concept of pain as an affective state*

167 The detection, transduction, transmission, modulation and projection of information to the central
168 nervous system (CNS) appears similar within all mammals (Viñuela-Fernández et al., 2007). In
169 principal, noxious stimuli which are painful to humans will also cause pain in other mammals. This
170 does not necessarily mean that they experience pain in the same way as humans, but it justifies the
171 inference that they do experience the aversive nature of pain (Panksepp, 1998; Weary et al., 2006).

172 When considering where and how pain is experienced much of the evidence supports the view that the
173 medial thalamocortical pathways, including the limbic system and insular cortex, play an important

174 role in mammals (Gu et al., 2013; Jasmin et al., 2004; Lu et al., 2016). Human patients with damage
175 to these areas of the brain report asymbolia, a condition that leaves patients being aware of the
176 sensory qualities of nociception but without experiencing the aversive nature of pain (e.g. Berthier et
177 al., 1988). This suggests that there is some separation of the sensory and affective dimensions of pain.
178 Conversely, Feinstein et al. (2016) recently reported no effect on the emotional awareness of pain in a
179 human patient with extensive damage to the insula, anterior cingulate and amygdala. This would
180 suggest that these regions are not necessary for the conscious experience of pain. The inconsistency in
181 these results raises questions regarding our understanding of where and how the brain experiences the
182 aversive nature of pain adding to the challenge of assessing the impact of pain on an animal's
183 affective state.

184 *2.3 Additional factors affecting pain experience*

185 An animal's previous experience of pain can have a significant impact on how it responds to a
186 noxious stimulus. Long term changes in pain response have been demonstrated to occur when animals
187 have experienced pain at an early age. Pain experienced as a neonate, either associated with chronic
188 inflammation (Benatti et al., 2009; Lim et al., 2009), or tissue insult (Beggs et al., 2012; Clark et al.,
189 2014), significantly reduces pain thresholds and increases the expression of pain-related behaviours as
190 an adult. These changes are also likely to be long lasting when compared with adults that have not
191 been exposed to pain as neonates (Beggs et al., 2012). The decreased pain threshold in these animals
192 could be due to sensitisation of peripheral neurons or nociceptors, or central mediation occurring at
193 least at the spinal cord level (Beggs et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2014).

194 Early life stress can also have significant effects on pain experienced as an adult. Animals born to
195 mothers experiencing high stress levels whilst pregnant, have an amplified pain response (Rutherford
196 et al., 2009; Sandercock et al., 2011). In addition, a mother's neonatal experience of pain has been
197 shown to affect her offspring's response to pain (Clark et al., 2014). The changes in pain response
198 seen in offspring are likely to be an adaptive response to the environment that the mother experiences,

199 with programming of gene expression preparing the offspring for a better chance of survival (Benatti
200 et al., 2009; Clark et al., 2014; Rutherford et al., 2009; Sandercock et al., 2011).

201 Differences in reactivity to pain also occur between sexes within species (Guesgen et al., 2011;
202 Prusator and Greenwood-Van Meerveld, 2016; Sorge et al., 2014; Winston et al., 2014); even if pain
203 responses in males and females are the same at birth, males have been shown to have a reduced
204 sensitivity to pain in comparison with females as they age (Guesgen et al., 2011), suggesting a
205 divergence in the ontogeny of pain processing systems. Other factors such as the animal's personality
206 (Ijichi et al., 2014), whether there is social support (Guesgen et al., 2014), whether the animal has had
207 previous experience with the context of the pain, such as with handling (Guesgen et al., 2013), or if
208 there is a presence of a human, particularly a male (Sorge et al., 2014), can affect how an animal deals
209 with and responds to pain. These additional influences add a layer of complexity when trying to assess
210 and manage animal pain.

211 *2.4 Managing pain*

212 Understanding of the major pathways and mediators involved in the transmission of nociceptive
213 information allow for a number of pharmacological interventions to be employed in pain management
214 (see Viñuela-Fernández et al., (2007) for review). There are many licensed products available to
215 professionals intended to be used to mitigate pain in certain species, including local and regional
216 anaesthetics, opioids and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) (Veterinary Medicines
217 Directorate., 2018). However, in some species such as sheep, licenced pain relief products are
218 currently not available in the UK (Veterinary Medicines Directorate., 2018), and so any pain relief
219 provided is given off-label (Lizarraga and Chambers, 2012), reducing the use of such drugs. For those
220 species for which licensed drugs are available, use in practice is still limited (Becker et al., 2013; Bell
221 et al., 2014; Ison and Rutherford, 2014; Richardson and Flecknell, 2005; Weber et al., 2012).

222 Commonly reported barriers to the use of pharmaceuticals include lack of knowledge of pain
223 recognition and assessment, as well as cost, residues in production animals, and uncertainties of their
224 impact on scientific studies in research animals (Bell et al., 2014; Huxley and Whay, 2006; Ison and

225 Rutherford, 2014; Lizarraga and Chambers, 2012; Richardson and Flecknell, 2005). Being able to
226 recognise, assess and evaluate pain in animals is thus critical to effectively preventing and alleviating
227 pain in order to improve the welfare of animals under human care (Flecknell, 2000; Gentle, 2001).

228 **3. Pain assessment**

229 For any pain assessment method to be of value it must allow for the recognition, assessment and
230 alleviation of pain in a sensitive and specific manner. Current scoring systems for recognising and
231 assessing pain in non-human animals often use a combination of assessing the physiological response,
232 measuring the general functioning of the body, as well as observing behaviour (Brondani et al., 2013;
233 Bussi eres et al., 2008; Molony et al., 2002; van Loon and VanDierendonck, 2015). These measures
234 have a number of limitations, sometimes producing contradictory results (Molony et al., 2002) (See
235 Weary et al. (2006) and Sneddon et al. (2014) for full reviews on other pain assessment measures and
236 their interpretation). Physiological responses such as changes in the heart rate, body temperature and
237 level of circulating cortisol provide measures of the sympathetic-adrenomedullary system and the
238 hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenocortical systems. Both these systems are not specific to pain, but also
239 influenced by positive and other negative affective states such as stress (Carlson et al., 2006; Jaremka
240 and Collins, 2017; Villani et al., 2006). Moreover, physical restraint is often required to obtain these
241 measures leading to a general stress response, further confusing interpretation of the data (see
242 Morm ede et al., (2007) for review). Poor nutrition (Ingvarlsen and Moyes, 2013; Lean et al., 2013),
243 lack of physical and mental stimulation (Matur et al., 2016; McCreary and Metz, 2016), and disease
244 (Raaperi et al., 2012; Šavc et al., 2016) are also possible causes of general body function change not
245 due to pain, making them unreliable measures. Although longer term changes in behaviour can be
246 objectively measured, they reflect the changes between two time-point observations rather than what
247 the animal is experiencing at any particular time (Weary et al., 2006). Monitoring acute behavioural
248 signs of pain provide a better indication of the current welfare of the animal and the pain they are
249 experiencing. These behaviours, however, are often not pain specific and affected by other factors
250 such as fear or stress (Gougoulis et al., 2010; Rutherford, 2002) creating problems with validity and
251 reliability. Obvious behavioural signs of pain are also not common to all mammals as stoical species

252 do not overtly express their affective state. More subtle signs of behaviour that can indicate how an
253 animal might feel are required for pain assessment for these species (Flecknell et al., 2011).
254 Moreover, pain has many dimensions, and the measure should be able to consider the intensity,
255 frequency, duration and quality of the pain (Ashley et al., 2005). Essentially, the measure must be
256 valid, reliable and feasible (Bussières et al., 2008; Molony and Kent, 1997).

257 *3.1 Validity*

258 A fundamental attribute of any measure is its validity. There are a number of different types of
259 validity, including; construct, convergent, discriminant, and internal. Construct validity refers to how
260 accurate the measure is at measuring that specific construct (Calvo et al., 2014), in this case, pain.
261 Differences recorded by the measure must be due to the true extent of differences between a painful
262 and non-painful state (discriminant validity); the measure should be both sensitive (be able to
263 correctly identify animals in pain) and specific (be able to correctly identify animals that are not in
264 pain) (Brondani et al., 2013). A good measure of internal validity for pain assessment is to measure
265 the changes that occur in response to analgesic provision in a dose dependent manner (Weary et al.,
266 2006). Thus, after analgesia, the animal should either no longer be in pain, or be in significantly
267 reduced pain, and the measure should be able to identify this correctly. A limitation to this approach is
268 in species for which there is no licenced analgesic, and hence no information about likely
269 effectiveness of that pain relief making internal validity difficult to test. Additionally, some analgesia
270 may not be effective due to modulation at the nociceptor level (Fleetwood-Walker et al., 2012).
271 Consideration must therefore be given to testing within subjects, assessing at both a baseline level
272 when no pain is present and again at a separate time point when pain is present. A new measure
273 should also be tested against an already validated measure for that construct (convergent validity)
274 (Battini et al., 2016). It is also critical that during validation of both new and established indicators
275 that observers are blind to the state of the animal (e.g. pain or no pain) to prevent observer bias
276 (Tuytens et al., 2016).

277 *3.2 Reliability*

278 For a test to be valid it must also be reliable (Dalla Costa et al., 2018). Reliability refers to a
279 measure's ability to generate the same result each time it is used on the same participant in a
280 consistent and stable manner, independent of the identity of the observer employing the measure
281 (Neuman, 2014; Oliver et al., 2014). The test-retest approach can be implemented to test the
282 consistency of a measure at producing the same result each time it is implemented, provided nothing
283 has changed within the context that the first measurement was made (Napolitano et al., 2011;
284 Prkachin and Solomon, 2008). It would also be expected that a consistent measure be repeatable,
285 yielding the same result each time an observer implemented it (intra-observer reliability) (Oliver et
286 al., 2014); however, the measure should also be repeatable and consistent across different observers
287 (inter-observer reliability) (Oliver et al., 2014; Sotocinal et al., 2011). Consideration of the time
288 interval between observations must be given as it can affect the reliability of measurements; too short
289 a time and observers may remember their original answers (Martin and Bateson, 2007). Observers can
290 also suffer fatigue causing their assessments to be inconsistent between the beginning and end of the
291 test (Kiddie and Collins, 2014).

292 *3.3 Feasibility*

293 For a pain assessment method to be useful it needs to be feasible (Solomon et al., 1997); this is a
294 measure of external validity whereby the test must do what it is designed to do in the real-world,
295 outside the context of developing and testing. For pain assessment methods, the measure must be
296 useable on farm, in the veterinary surgery, in the home, in the field or within a laboratory animal
297 facility and yield the same result, ideally using no specialist apparatus or equipment (Battini et al.,
298 2016). The measure should be quick and easy to use by people with different previous experience,
299 following minimal training, to be of maximum use (Solomon et al., 1997). Being able to use the
300 measure in real-time is essential to get the best assessment of the animal's current pain state, and
301 being able to link the measure to an intervention score enhances its usefulness (McLennan et al.,
302 2016; Oliver et al., 2014). These are very difficult criteria to achieve for any measure, but they should
303 be considered fully when developing or evaluating any new measure of pain, such as facial
304 expression.

305 4. **Facial expression scales as a tool for pain assessment in mammals**

306 The use of facial expressions to assess pain has become frequent in human medicine and research
307 (Boerner et al., 2013; Prkachin et al., 1994; Prkachin and Solomon, 2008; Schiavenato et al., 2008).
308 The Facial Action Coding System (FACS) was originally developed by Ekman and Friesen (1978) to
309 measure changes of the face or groups of muscles, known as “action units” (AUs), to an emotional
310 stimulus. Prkachin (1992) was the first to apply the FACS to assess the facial expressions of pain in
311 humans. Since then, there have been a number of advanced studies addressing the possible uses and
312 limitations of scoring facial expressions to assess pain in humans. Schiavenato et al. (2008), noted that
313 despite commonality of facial pain expressions across different ethnicities and sexes, there were
314 inconsistencies in expression across age groups leading to slightly revised versions of the FACS for
315 neonates (Neonates Facial Coding System (NFCS) (Ahola Kohut and Pillai Riddell, 2009);
316 Schiavenato et al., 2008), infants (Baby FACS) (Ahola Kohut et al., 2012) and children (Child Facial
317 Coding System (CFCS) (Vervoort et al., 2011, 2008; Vlaeyen et al., 2009). Ahola Kohut and Pillai
318 Riddell (2009) investigated the ability to discriminate between pain-related and non-pain related
319 distress in neonates by means of the NFCS; however, it was only possible to distinguish different
320 intensities of distress, rather than between states. Conversely, Kunz et al. (2013) identified distinct
321 aversive feelings through differing combinations of AUs being expressed at different strengths. These
322 studies made some key changes to the original FACS (separate FACS for differing age categories, and
323 differing combinations of units for different constructs) refining the technique for use in humans
324 making it valid, reliable and feasible pain assessment tool in a variety of contexts.

325 A number of FACS for animals have been recently developed (cats (Caeiro et al., 2017), horses
326 (Wathan et al., 2015), chimpanzees (Parr et al., 2007), and macaques (Julle-Danière et al., 2015; Parr
327 et al., 2010)), detailing all possible individual facial movements that can occur across the face. FACS
328 provide a method of objectively identifying facial areas that may be affected by particular contexts
329 (Wathan et al., 2015); however, these systems can be quite complex with as many as 17 different AUs
330 to assess (Wathan et al., 2015). They have not yet been applied to particular contexts such as pain.
331 Having a scale that contains specific actions or group of actions shown to appear in relation to pain is

332 likely to be more feasible in the clinical setting. Within the last twelve years a number of facial
333 expression scales (also known as “Grimace Scales”) have been designed specifically to assess pain in
334 animals. Many of these scales focus on just four or five facial areas and consider a particular action as
335 present (score 2), partially present (score 1) or not present (score 0) (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di
336 Giminiani et al., 2016; Gleerup et al., 2015; Guesgen et al., 2016; Häger et al., 2017; Holden et al.,
337 2014; Keating et al., 2012; Langford et al., 2010; McLennan et al., 2016; Reijgwart et al., 2017;
338 Sotocinal et al., 2011; van Loon and VanDierendonck, 2015). Animals are tested in pain and non-pain
339 states, and a comparison made of their facial expression scores in each context. In order for these
340 scales to be a valid pain assessment tool, careful consideration of a number of factors when
341 developing and testing a facial expression scale is required, as it would for any other new pain
342 assessment method. These factors include the experimental design, the pain stimulus used, provision
343 of analgesia, and another known pain assessment tool for comparison, at a minimum. The following
344 scales are now considered: the Mouse Grimace Scale (MGS) (Langford et al., 2010), the Rat Grimace
345 Scale (RGS) (Sotocinal et al., 2011), the Rabbit Grimace Scale (RbtGS) (Keating et al., 2012), the
346 Ferret Grimace Scale (FGS) (Reijgwart et al., 2017), the Horse Grimace Scale (HGS) (Dalla Costa et
347 al., 2016), the Equine Utrecht University Scale for Facial Assessment of Pain (EQUUS-FAP) (van
348 Loon and VanDierendonck, 2015), the Equine Pain Face (Gleerup et al., 2015), the Sheep Pain Facial
349 Expression Scale (SPFES) (McLennan et al., 2016), the Sheep Grimace Scale (SGS) (Häger et al.,
350 2017), the Lamb Grimace Scale (LGS) (Guesgen et al., 2016), the Piglet Grimace Scale (PGS) (Di
351 Giminiani et al., 2016) and the facial pain assessment tool for cats developed by Holden et al., (2014).

352 *4.1 Image capture and modification*

353 Facial expression scales are developed through the analysis of multiple images taken of animals
354 during pain and non-pain states. The majority of scales use high definition video footage with
355 multiple cameras to capture the facial expression of animals pre- and post-pain stimulus exposure
356 (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani et al., 2016; Gleerup et al., 2015; Guesgen et al., 2016; Häger
357 et al., 2017; Keating et al., 2012; Langford et al., 2010; Leach et al., 2012; Leung et al., 2016;
358 Matsumiya et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2016b, 2015; Miller and Leach, 2016; Sotocinal et al., 2011).

359 Some have been developed or tested using still photographs alone (Finlayson et al., 2016; Holden et
360 al., 2014; McLennan et al., 2016; Miller and Leach, 2016, 2015, 2014; Reijgwart et al., 2017). Those
361 that used video footage obtained still images from the video, either manually or through a specific
362 piece of software called “Rodent Face Finder[®]” which selects frames when there is a clear view of the
363 rodents’ face in front of the camera (Sotocinal et al., 2011). This type of technology helps to reduce
364 the bias of collecting and selecting images manually (Tuttle et al., 2018). Where this technology has
365 not been available, assistants blind to treatments and time points have been utilised to select images
366 from footage where there is a clear view of the face of the animal. Images can be selected at certain
367 time points throughout the filming; e.g. Langford et al. (2010) collected images at 3 minute intervals,
368 whilst Guesgen et al. (2016) selected images every 15 seconds pre-docking and every 75 secs post-
369 docking. Others have selected randomly throughout the time when any clear view of the animals’ face
370 was in front of the camera (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani et al., 2016; Häger et al., 2017;
371 Leung et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2015). The latter technique ensures that there is a large cohort of
372 images from which to choose randomly those of the highest quality, but it can be time consuming and
373 difficult to replicate in other studies if there are no set parameters of when and how to collect images.
374 Having a more structured approach such as that of Langford et al. (2010) or Guesgen et al. (2016), can
375 improve this.

376 There is a lack of consistency between studies in collecting images for the facial expression scoring in
377 the length of each recording, or how many photographs were taken. Durations of video recordings
378 used by researchers ranged from just 1 minute pre-pain stimulus (Guesgen et al., 2016) up to 30
379 minutes of footage (Häger et al., 2017; Matsumiya et al., 2012), with after pain-stimulus footage
380 lasting for 5 minutes (Di Giminiani et al., 2016) or up to 30 minutes (Sotocinal et al., 2011). The
381 length of footage or number of photographs taken should be sufficient to allow for the capture of the
382 most appropriate images for facial expression analysis. This is likely to vary between species as well
383 as between pain stimuli. Some studies may also have a number of constraints, such as time or field
384 location that prevent long durations of video capture. A major advantage of facial expression is that it

385 is a tool for rapid assessment of pain, therefore videos of shorter duration may be more practical,
386 especially when testing the scale.

387 The time intervals to the pain at which the footage was recorded also varied between studies. Baseline
388 images were taken either immediately before the intervention (Gleerup et al., 2015), or up to one
389 week before intervention (Miller and Leach, 2014). For those looking at naturally occurring diseases,
390 baseline values have been captured much later after the initial pain images (one week for horses with
391 acute laminitis (Dalla Costa et al., 2016), and up to 90 days after initial treatment for sheep with
392 footrot (McLennan et al., 2016)). Once the pain stimulus was applied some immediately started
393 recording (Guesgen et al., 2016) whilst others waited for varying lengths of time (up to 8 hours (Dalla
394 Costa et al., 2014)), especially when waiting for any effects of anaesthesia to wear off, or for the
395 height of pain or benefit of analgesia to become evident. The experimental design likely dictates the
396 most appropriate time to capture images.

397 The quality of the image used is highlighted by a number of researchers as being an important part of
398 ensuring reliability of the scales (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani et al., 2016; Keating et al.,
399 2012; McLennan et al., 2016). Many of the papers have clearly stated the need to use high definition
400 video cameras or still cameras to ensure the best quality image (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani
401 et al., 2016; Häger et al., 2017; Keating et al., 2012; Langford et al., 2010; McLennan et al., 2016;
402 Sotocinal et al., 2011). Another key point is to ensure that shadows are not present on the face; the use
403 of good lighting in the area where images are taken can help reduce this (Finlayson et al., 2016;
404 Reijgwart et al., 2017). The use of bright light, or camera flashes should be avoided as they may be
405 aversive (Holden et al., 2014). Langford et al. (2010), carried out retrospective adjustment of
406 brightness and contrast on their images to overcome some of the quality issues. In addition, the angle
407 at which photographs are taken is important, and the set-up of each image capture technique needs to
408 be carefully considered; Reijgwart et al. (2017) used a tunnel for each ferret to exit from at the same
409 height in line with the camera, whilst Di Giminiani et al. (2016) had four cameras around the edge of
410 the pen at a set height of 19cm (piglet head height). Dalla Costa et al. (2014), placed cameras at a
411 height above the horse to have the greatest chance of collecting both behaviour and facial images,

412 impacting on the angle that the images were taken. Others have had to handle the animals during the
413 procedure (Di Giminiani et al., 2016; Guesgen et al., 2016; Keating et al., 2012). This had an effect on
414 the facial expression scores given by observers in lambs (Guesgen et al., 2016), whilst in mice, the
415 type of handling was found to have no effect on the facial expression score given (Miller and Leach,
416 2016). Avoiding handling or close contact with the animal is to be preferred during image capture, as
417 many prey species do not overtly express signs of pain and distress when potential predators such as
418 humans are present (Sorge et al., 2014). Leaving an animal to perform these behaviours in conditions
419 that meet their needs is likely to yield the best results during development stages.

420 Most researchers clearly state that the images were cropped so that other postures or behaviours, or
421 indicators of any surgery or disease, are not visible (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani et al.,
422 2016; Häger et al., 2017; Holden et al., 2014; Keating et al., 2012; Langford et al., 2010; McLennan et
423 al., 2016; Reijgwart et al., 2017; Sotocinal et al., 2011). Cropping images ensures that only the face of
424 the animal is studied and that the rest of the body does not influence the scorer. Reijgwart et al.
425 (2017), and Dalla Costa et al. (2017), also removed the background of the animal's face and displayed
426 all images with a uniform background. It has not been tested whether the background information
427 provided in images has an effect on an observers' scores by providing information about the context
428 in which the animal is photographed. Although it seems unlikely that the background in cropped
429 images could provide such information, until this is tested, removal of the background information
430 from the image is to be encouraged.

431 *4.2. Scale development*

432 Images taken are compared using a collage of multiple images from the pre- and post-pain stimulus to
433 identify specific AUs (e.g. ear position, cheek tightening, or eye closure) that change in the facial
434 expression of an individual animal. The images or stills are often analysed by time-blinded assistants
435 or experts in the field that have been blinded to time and treatment (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Keating
436 et al., 2012; Langford et al., 2010). Many of the scales do not detail exactly how the AUs are selected;
437 however, the FGS (Reijgwart et al., 2017) and the PGS studies (Di Giminiani et al., 2016) state that

438 for selection of specific AUs to be included in the scale they had to have consistently changed within
439 animal at 25% and 50% of observations, respectively. Stating clearly the number of times a change
440 must occur before it becomes part of a facial expression scale helps to reduce the number of items
441 within the scale and provides clear justification for its inclusion.

442 The RGS (Sotocinal et al., 2011) was developed after trying to use the MGS for rats; as observers
443 became more experienced with the MGS, it was noted that rat's facial expression differed from mice.
444 The area of the nose and cheek would flatten in the rats rather than bulge as it does in mice (Sotocinal
445 et al., 2011; Langford et al., 2010). The RGS also uses only four AUs rather than the five from the
446 MGS, combining nose and cheek flattening as they correlated best with the occurrence of pain.
447 Although different scales (i.e. for different species) share interspecies generic AUs (i.e. orbital
448 tightening), it is important that each species has their own scale developed, specific to them. Using a
449 scale from other species is likely to reduce the validity and reliability of the scale. Even within
450 species, the AUs may be slightly different across ages; the LGS (Guesgen et al., 2016) and SPFES
451 (McLennan et al., 2016) both have the same five areas, but the changes that occur in some of these
452 areas are slightly different; the ears of lambs point backwards when in pain, whereas in adult sheep
453 the ears rotate ventrally and caudally, and the cheek area in lambs being flattened, whereas in adult
454 sheep the masseter muscle becomes more prominent. These differences may be due to different
455 stimuli being used, but there is also the possibility that animals' express pain differently across life
456 stages. More validation work is required to assess the facial expressions of animals across life stages,
457 between sexes and across different phenotypes in order to ensure the consistency of the scales.

458 Most scales have followed a scoring system of zero to two for each AU, with zero being an AU "not
459 present", one being "partially or moderately present" and two being "obviously present or present".
460 Häger et al. (2017), included a score of three for the action "Flehming", as the response was not
461 mutually exclusive from the action "head position" (score 2) and so a higher score indicated the
462 severity of the pain expressed through this behaviour. Individual AU scores are assessed to provide an
463 overall facial expression score for each animal at each time point. Some scales use a total pain score,
464 adding up all the individual AU scores at any time point (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Häger et al., 2017;

465 McLennan et al., 2016), whilst others, such as the RGS (Sotocinal et al., 2011) use an average score
466 of all units reducing the amount of variation, but limiting the total difference between baseline and
467 pain stimulus. By using a total pain score there is a clearer ability to measure the extent of pain
468 experienced by the animal at a time point and to assess how this might change over time in more
469 detail, thus providing higher sensitivity. The advantage of using the average of the AUs is that it is
470 less sensitive to missing values than the total score (Leach et al., 2012). Missing values can often
471 occur when AUs are not visible due to the orientation of the animals or the contrast in the image or
472 video is too low to distinguish particular AUs (Leach et al., 2012).

473 *4.3 Experimental design and pain stimulus*

474 Progress in animal pain assessment relies upon the development of robust experimental designs
475 (Panksepp, 1998). The facial expression scales developed for different species have varied in
476 experimental design. Better designs have allowed for within-animal comparisons, collecting a
477 baseline score before intervention and then comparing to a known pain state that can be assessed and
478 monitored in response to pain relief given at increasing doses (Langford et al., 2010; Sotocinal et al.,
479 2011). Within-animal designs allow for true changes to be monitored without other variables (e.g.
480 personality, genetics, and previous experience) confounding the results (Dawkins, 2007). There are
481 likely to be differences within each individual's baseline image; many scales note that baseline values
482 are not zero suggesting that certain AUs are more prominent in some individuals than in others, and
483 that at least some AUs are visible only momentarily in a non-pain state (e.g. orbital tightening and
484 blinking) (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani et al., 2016; Guesgen et al., 2016; Keating et al.,
485 2012; MacRae et al., 2018; McLennan et al., 2016; Reijgwart et al., 2017; Sotocinal et al., 2011).
486 Differences between strains and sexes of mice have also been noted (Miller et al., 2015; Miller and
487 Leach, 2015), but this needs to be explored in other species.

488 Between-animal designs have been used alongside within-animal designs by carefully matching
489 animals with a control group to help further validate the scales (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Guesgen et
490 al., 2016; Keating et al., 2012; MacRae et al., 2018; McLennan et al., 2016). Establishing that control

491 animals do not change their facial expression over time ensures that changes observed in pain state
492 animals were due to the pain, or the pain being relieved, and not due to general changes in facial
493 expression. This is especially useful in surgical designs where anaesthesia may have an effect on the
494 facial expression, as noted by Dalla Costa et al. (2014) and Miller et al. (2016a, 2015). Scales that
495 have been developed solely based on between-animal designs, such as that used by Holden et al.
496 (2014), allow for differences in general facial expression between pain and non-pain states to be
497 determined. They do not however allow for a full assessment of the pain experienced in an individual
498 and therefore a number of the measures for validity cannot be effectively assessed.

499 The pain stimulus used when developing the scales has also varied; for many of the laboratory
500 animals the use of validated nociceptive assays such as application of Complete Freund's Adjuvant
501 (CFA), Kaolin, and intra-plantar carrageenan have been routinely utilised (e.g. Langford et al., 2010;
502 Sotocinal et al., 2011). Using an already validated painful stimulus allows for a good level of
503 construct and convergent validity to be assessed (Battini et al., 2016; Calvo et al., 2014). Surgical
504 interventions have also been used to develop facial expression scales, such as laparotomy (Langford et
505 al., 2010), and surgical castration in horses (Dalla Costa et al., 2014). Others have used common
506 husbandry practices such as tattooing (Keating et al., 2012), or tail docking (Di Giminiani et al., 2016;
507 Viscardi et al., 2017), whilst others have used a naturally occurring pain state such as that of a disease
508 (McLennan et al., 2016). It can be argued that the use of natural pain states is better than induced
509 laboratory methods in providing face and predictive validity of a pain assessment measure (Mogil,
510 2009). However, there is likely to be better control in laboratory-based settings with more consistency
511 in pain stimulus provided, as well as better overall experimental designs that are free from practical
512 restrictions or factors that are unavoidable when working in the field. Di Giminiani et al. (2016), for
513 example, had to collect baseline data from piglets that had already been tooth-clipped a few days
514 before the tail-docking experiment. This could have affected the development of the scale, as the
515 values may not have provided a true baseline if any pain was still present due to the tooth-clipping
516 procedure. In their second experiment, animals had not been exposed to any painful stimulus before
517 castration.

518 Where more than one pain stimulus has been used, or where there is a need to assess the effect of
519 handling, a cross over design can be useful. Glerup et al. (2015) and Keating et al. (2012) used this
520 design when developing their scales. Glerup et al. (2015) used a semi-randomised, controlled, cross-
521 over trial to test multiple pain stimuli which included a tourniquet and a topical application of
522 capsaicin. Each horse received noxious stimuli in the same sequence, but with an observer present or
523 not allowing for any observer effect on facial expression to be monitored and assessed, as well as
524 testing the effect of different stimuli. Keating et al. (2012) also used a cross-over design to account for
525 the effect of tattooing, handling, and analgesic administration; eight New Zealand rabbits each
526 underwent four different treatments of actual or sham tattooing, with and without prior application of
527 a topical local anaesthetic.

528 The type of stimulus chosen when developing facial expression scales should be carefully considered.
529 Langford et al. (2010) showed that the action units comprising the mouse grimace scale appeared to
530 be sensitive to ‘noxious stimuli of moderate duration’ (i.e. more than 10 minutes), and therefore we
531 should be cautious when using this method to assess very acute painful stimuli. Miller and Leach
532 (2014) used the MGS to assess the pain associated with routine ear notching in C57BL6 mice and
533 found no difference between groups that underwent ear notching or not (all animals received the same
534 handling and restraint and the noise of the clipper closing) and compared to baseline. They suggested
535 that the lack of change in the MGS may have been due to the potentially acute nature of this noxious
536 stimulus. A similar finding was seen by Williams et al. (2008) when using ultrasonic vocalisations to
537 assess pain following ear notching in C57BL6 mice. Sotocinal et al. (2011), also noted that the pain
538 facial expression in the rats did not last for more than 48 hours, which they suggested was a natural
539 limiting factor imposed by facial expression itself, especially in chronic pain. This was further
540 supported by Whittaker and colleagues who showed no change in the rat grimace scale when used to
541 assess the more chronic pain associated with chemotherapy-induced mucositis (Whittaker et al.,
542 2016). Animals suffering from chronic pain are unlikely to be able to maintain a certain expression
543 long term as pain can fluctuate over time (Baliki et al., 2006; Kunz et al., 2011). Additionally, other

544 factors such as the presence of a male observer or even simply a t-shirt worn by a male observer the
545 previous night, has been shown to inhibit the facial expression of pain (Sorge et al., 2014).

546 The correct emotional construct should also be assessed with a particular scale; Finlayson et al. (2016)
547 used the RGS to assess for positive indicators in rats compared with a contrast stimulus, but did not
548 employ painful stimuli. There were no differences in RGS scores between conditions which shows
549 that the RGS has good discriminant validity as it did not increase in intensity in non-painful
550 situations; however, this was an incorrect use of the scale as it was used to measure something for
551 which it had not been designed. Dalla Costa et al. (2017) found the HGS score was not influenced by
552 positive or negative emotional states other than pain, inferring that the HGS is a specific tool for
553 assessing pain. Further testing of many of the facial expression scales is still required to ensure
554 discriminant validity.

555 *4.4 Provision of analgesia*

556 A key component in assessing internal validity of a pain assessment tool is to assess the effect of
557 analgesia in a dose dependent manner, and to measure the changes that occur in the measurement tool
558 (Sotocinal et al., 2011). These changes should show that by providing analgesia in this manner, there
559 is a predicted consistent gradual decrease in the facial expression score as the dose of pain relief
560 increases. During the development of facial expression scales there have been a range of ways in
561 which analgesia has been administered, and only two of the scales, the MGS, and the RGS, have
562 provided pain relief in this dose dependent manner during developmental stages (Langford et al.,
563 2010; Sotocinal et al., 2011). Both of these scales have also been further tested in this regard and
564 significant dose dependent changes were seen in the expression of mice (Langford et al., 2010;
565 Matsumiya et al., 2012) and rats (Sotocinal et al., 2011). These results demonstrate that these scales
566 are effective and valid at measuring the pain experienced by these animals.

567 It is not always possible to test the effect of analgesia in a dose-dependent manner for several reasons;
568 obtaining ethical approval for dose-dependent facial expression testing and observation of pain may
569 not be possible. This is especially true in non-laboratory contexts where scales may be developed as

570 part of observations of naturally occurring pain states (McLennan et al., 2016; van Loon and
571 VanDierendonck, 2015), or as part of other experiments where protocols and procedures cannot be
572 changed (Häger et al., 2017; Reijgwart et al., 2017). This has resulted in a variety of protocols used
573 when giving analgesia throughout the differing scales. In these circumstances careful consideration
574 must be given as to when analgesia is provided, and when to best capture facial images so that a true
575 baseline and a true pain state are available. Different groups of animals may be needed to receive
576 differing levels of analgesia or other classes of analgesics to help maintain good animal welfare, as
577 well as providing information about the effects of analgesics on facial expression. The HGS (Dalla
578 Costa et al., 2014) for example, was developed whilst horses underwent surgical castration. For
579 ethical and welfare reasons perioperative analgesia was provided to two groups of horses, with one
580 group provided with additional analgesia orally 6 hours after the surgery. Pain-free images obtained
581 before the surgery were compared with images captured 8 hours after the surgery and after analgesia
582 had been administered for both groups. Although there were significant differences between control
583 and castrated horses' facial expression scores, there were no differences in facial expression between
584 the two post-castration groups despite the possible effect of additional analgesia provided 2 hours
585 before the image capture. These authors state that it is not currently possible to differentiate between
586 post-procedure pain and distress, meaning validation of the scale is not complete. This is also the case
587 for the EQUUS-FAP and SGS, in which images for pain states were taken after analgesia had been
588 provided. The EQUUS-FAP used images from horses suffering from colic that had been provided
589 with NSAIDs upon arrival at the hospital, and horses were only removed from the study if they
590 needed further analgesia (van Loon and VanDierendonck, 2015). The SGS (Häger et al., 2017) was
591 unable to assess the true pain state of the sheep after surgery as animals were provided with analgesia
592 on a daily basis for up to 13 days after surgery. Such methods make it impossible to compare fully
593 painful and pain free states to validate the scales.

594 For species which have no known effective analgesic drug, or where the evidence of the effectiveness
595 of the drug is contradictory, full validation can be difficult. During the development of the SPFES half
596 the diseased sheep were treated with antibiotics and a NSAID, whilst the other half received

597 antibiotics only, in line with current industry practices (McLennan et al., 2016). Images were
598 collected before the analgesia was provided when pain was expected to be at its highest, and again at
599 42 or 90 days after initial treatment by which time the disease had resolved. No differences in facial
600 expression were found between the two different treatment groups, although there were differences
601 between control and diseased sheep. Although a true pain state and baseline were captured, the effect
602 of the NSAID was not captured as this is considered to be most effective for only 72 hours (Shukla et
603 al., 2007). There is a need for more research for species where there is a lack of information on the
604 most effective pain relief, and what dosages and time intervals to use. Indeed, Matsumiya et al. (2012)
605 found that the dose required to make the most change in facial expression of mice was higher than
606 that currently advised, with some drugs not effective at reducing the facial expression of pain in these
607 animals.

608 *4.5 Other pain assessment tools for comparison*

609 To show convergent validity of the scales, many researchers have incorporated other pain assessment
610 tools for comparison with the facial expression scores (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Langford et al., 2010;
611 McLennan et al., 2016; Sotocinal et al., 2011). This has allowed assessment of degree of correlation.
612 Behavioural and physiological measures, including spontaneous behaviours and cortisol
613 concentrations were the most frequent other pain assessment tools utilised (Dalla Costa et al., 2014;
614 Di Giminiani et al., 2016; Gleerup et al., 2015; Häger et al., 2017; Keating et al., 2012; Langford et
615 al., 2010; MacRae et al., 2018; Sotocinal et al., 2011). Each of these measures has its own validity
616 issues which should be considered when interpreting correlations between measures. For scales
617 developed not using contrived pain states, veterinary assessments and subjective judgements of pain
618 experienced by the animal were utilised instead. Subjective assessments such as those carried out by
619 veterinarians, although useful, have limited validity in correlation studies (Weary et al., 2006). It is
620 important to use measures that have already been tested and validated for animal pain. Good
621 correlation between measures with the facial expression scale will support validity, therefore it is
622 essential that careful consideration is given to what measures are the most suitable. For example,
623 Leach and colleagues showed a high positive correlation between changes in validated spontaneous

624 pain behaviours and the MGS (Leach et al., 2012), whilst McLennan et al. (2016) correlated lameness
625 and lesion scores of footrot, previously validated as painful by Ley et al. (1995), with the SPFES.

626 *4.6 Scale testing*

627 The reliability and repeatability of the tool is assessed during testing of the scale (see table 1 for
628 testing values of current scales). This is carried out by using time- and treatment-blind observers who
629 have undergone some level of training. These scorers are asked to assess one or two photographs or
630 video stills of each animal for each AU of the scale, providing a score of 0 to 2 as detailed previously.
631 The scores from each observer are compared for consistency between observers in most studies by
632 using an Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani et al., 2016;
633 Häger et al., 2017; Keating et al., 2012; Langford et al., 2010; McLennan et al., 2016; Reijgwart et al.,
634 2017; Sotocinal et al., 2011; van Loon and VanDierendonck, 2015). In addition to scoring each
635 individual unit, observers are often also asked to provide a global pain assessment of the facial
636 expression based on their own experience and expertise, and to make a judgement about how much
637 pain they think the animal has (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Holden et al., 2014; Keating et al., 2012;
638 Langford et al., 2010; McLennan et al., 2016; Reijgwart et al., 2017; Sotocinal et al., 2011). These
639 subjective decisions are often used to calculate an overall degree of accuracy, testing for how many of
640 the images were assessed correctly as being in pain or not. McLennan et al. (2016) found that
641 accuracy improved greatly when using the total pain score rather than the global assessment of pain.
642 Removing the need to make a decision about an animal's affective state and simply assessing the
643 individual AUs was a more accurate way of identifying sheep in pain. McLennan et al. (2016) were
644 also able to provide guidance on when analgesia should be considered by analysing the sensitivity and
645 specificity of each level of total pain score against a lameness score (a valid pain indicator for sheep
646 with footrot (Ley et al., 1995)), something which is missing from other scales. In 2018, Dalla Costa
647 and colleagues proposed a statistical approach to identifying a classifier that can estimate the pain
648 status of the animal based on AUs included in HGS and MGS. They found that AUs can be weighted
649 to best estimate the pain condition of an animal (Dalla Costa et al., 2018). These results provide

650 support for using the facial expression scales and not relying on an overall judgement of pain simply
651 based on experience.

652 The way in which testing has been carried out is fairly standard across the scales, except for the
653 number of blinded observers used which has ranged from 2 (MacRae et al., 2018) to 68 (Holden et al.,
654 2014). Developing a scale based on initial observations and subsequent scoring by a small number of
655 observers is unlikely to represent an objective or valid scale (due to the risk of observer bias) as it may
656 not provide effective indices visible to all. The more observers that can be utilised during testing, the
657 more likely that the scale represents actual objective changes and also allows any problems requiring
658 further development of the scale to be identified. The FGS (Reijgwart et al., 2017) employed a new
659 testing technique by providing each of their 11 blinded observers with a seven-part survey which
660 included a week between AUs. This meant that each observer carried out a global assessment before
661 any training, and was then trained for each AU separately before scoring that AU, with one week
662 between each AU. They then carried out an additional global assessment. They were able to test both
663 inter- and intra-observer reliability, with the effect of training. They had good results for both the
664 inter-observer (ICC=0.89 pre-training, and ICC=0.89 post-training) and for the intra-observer
665 reliability (ICC=0.67). The lower level of ICC for intra-observer reliability test was attributed to the
666 effect of training on the observers. The authors also stated that there were fewer missing overall pain
667 scores suggesting there was an improved confidence by the observers to assign a pain score after
668 viewing examples of each AU providing support for the need for careful training when using these
669 scales.

670 Reijgwart et al. (2017) also discuss the effect of ferret coat type on observers' ability to assign scores
671 to certain areas of the face. They report that observers had more difficulty assigning scores to long-
672 haired ferrets. The current authors have all experienced difficulties in assessing the facial expression
673 of darker-haired animals and animals that have had a mixed colouring on their face as it can be
674 difficult to determine if certain features are changing due to shadow or a different coat colour. Further
675 research is needed into the effect of hair length, muscularity, and coat colour on the ability of
676 observers to assess the facial expression of animals.

677 *4.7 Feasibility testing*

678 Evidence of feasibility of the facial expression scales is, in our opinion, delaying the full utilisation of
679 the scales as a pain assessment tool. The MGS and the RGS have been the only scales so far tested for
680 feasibility with live-scoring compared with retrospective footage analysis. Miller and Leach (2015)
681 compared live-scoring with a photographic data collection of baseline images of different strains and
682 sexes of mice on three separate occasions. They directly compared the 10-minute live-scoring with the
683 photographic data that were collected at the same time. They found that for the female mice
684 photographic scores were significantly higher than the live-scores for all four strains tested. For the
685 male mice there were differences between strains, with C57BL/6 mice scoring higher in photographs
686 than in live observations. C3H/He male mice did not have significantly different scores between the
687 two methods. These were baseline scores in which there was no pain so there should not be a
688 significant difference; however, there may be particular phenotypic features of certain strains that are
689 more difficult to score live than through photographs. When live-scoring the observer would look at
690 the mouse for 5 seconds and then award the appropriate score for each facial AU. This was carried out
691 on three occasions at the beginning, mid-point and end of a ten-minute period. In contrast, the
692 photographs which were used for retrospective analysis were taken across the ten-minute period
693 whenever the mouse was facing the camera. The different methods and timing of collection may have
694 led to observer bias (systematic timings compared with right position), or possibly the facial
695 expression changed due to different activities (chewing, sniffing, exploration, walking, etc.) being
696 performed between live scoring and the photographic image scoring.

697 Leung et al. (2016) tested the feasibility of the RGS to accurately assess pain in rats by comparing the
698 standard method of image assessment with real-time observations (interval and point). Real-time
699 observations were carried out at the same time as the video footage to allow for direct comparisons as
700 in the study by Miller and Leach (2015). Leung et al. (2016) used two different methods that were
701 repeated every 30 seconds for 10-minutes of observations: 1) a point observation that was alternated
702 with, 2) 15 second interval observations where the animal was observed for 15 seconds and assigned a
703 single score for the period. Scores were averaged at three-minute intervals to produce three single

704 scores which were then averaged again to produce a single score across the 10-minute period, as in
705 the standard method for the RGS (Sotocinal et al., 2011) to allow for direct comparison. To assess
706 whether the length of observation period also made a difference, real-time observation scores were
707 averaged from the first five and two minutes of observations. They found that there was good
708 agreement between the real-time scores and the standard method with most of the real-time
709 observations able to discriminate between treatment groups. Interval observations were found to be
710 more sensitive than point observations, and multiple observations were better at correctly predicting
711 treatment groups than single observations. These results suggest a single observation should not be
712 relied upon when making treatment decisions. Longer observation periods (5-minute) were found to
713 also provide a better assessment of the pain, and were considered to provide a good practical balance
714 to assessment of pain. In horses, short video-clips (15-seconds) were scored using HGS and then
715 compared to HGS scores from still images (Dalla Costa et al., 2016). No significant differences in
716 HGS total scores between the scoring of still images and video sequences were found. However, the
717 15-second video clips were reported as being more difficult to score for the observers with a high
718 level of variation between the observers.

719 These results demonstrate that facial expression scales could be utilised in real-time pain assessment.
720 More research into this area is however required to fully understand whether this difference between
721 live scores and retrospective scoring is due to difficulty in live scoring, or whether there are
722 advantages over being able to pause and choose the right moment to observe the facial images. There
723 is also a clear advantage to making multiple observations over a longer period of time rather than
724 using just one short observation period. When it comes to assessing pain, its fluctuating nature and the
725 influence of a number of factors that cannot be controlled for need to be considered.

726 Table 2 provides guidelines for best practice in developing and validating any future facial expression
727 scales, with particular consideration of pain. Scales need to be developed for each species, across key
728 life stages and potentially with the inclusion of differing phenotypic features such as those found
729 across breeds, especially if these differ significantly. The majority of scales require full feasibility
730 testing and this should be incorporated into the further development of current and future scales.

731 **5. Clinical applications of facial expression as a method of pain assessment**

732 When making a decision about a patient, whether it be in clinical practice or a research setting, being
733 able to assess the severity of the pain is vital to improving their welfare (Ashley et al., 2005). Many of
734 the current methods of pain assessment are not clinically relevant; many are retrospective, time
735 consuming, and require the caregiver to make a subjective judgement about whether pain relief should
736 be provided or not (Egger et al., 2014; Leach et al., 2009). Variations among clinicians on the level of
737 pain they believe an animal may suffer and differences in empathy levels, which play a role in
738 whether or not pain relief is provided to these animals, make such assessments unreliable (Bell et al.,
739 2014; Huxley and Whay, 2006; Ison and Rutherford, 2014; Norring et al., 2014). Inconsistent care
740 due to a lack of ability to recognise and evaluate pain is a significant factor reported by veterinarians
741 as a reason why they do not provide pain relief (Richardson and Flecknell, 2005), thus causing poor
742 welfare.

743 Much of the research into facial expression has focused on the development of scales within a
744 research setting. Few have undergone full feasibility testing and many of the scales are not yet widely
745 utilised in clinical practice; however, they have been developed with clinical relevance in mind and
746 have been demonstrated to be reliable and valid measures of pain. Many scales were developed using
747 experimental designs based on clinical procedures (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Di Giminiani et al., 2016;
748 Häger et al., 2017; Keating et al., 2012; Langford et al., 2010; MacRae et al., 2018; Reijgwart et al.,
749 2017; Sotocinal et al., 2011), or naturally occurring diseases (Holden et al., 2014; McLennan et al.,
750 2016) suggesting feasibility, but testing is still required. Testing feasibility can be carried out in the
751 research setting, but the true feasibility and value of the scales will come from clinicians using them
752 in real life settings and feeding back to authors. Uptake of the facial expression scales to assess pain in
753 real-time within clinical practice is likely to increase as more data demonstrating its feasibility
754 become available.

755 Despite the current lack of full feasibility testing, there are numerous advantages to using facial
756 expression over other pain assessment methods in clinical and research practice. Facial expression has

757 been shown to be a tool that can help to alleviate a number of the problems associated with other pain
758 assessment techniques. Minimal training (simply providing the scale and descriptions for observers to
759 read themselves) is all that is required to be effective and reliable at using facial expression to
760 recognise and evaluate pain in animals (Dalla Costa et al., 2014; Keating et al., 2012; Langford et al.,
761 2010; McLennan et al., 2016; Sotocinal et al., 2011); however, sensitivity and specificity is likely to
762 improve with more detailed and structured training (Reijgwart et al., 2017). Continued training and
763 reliability testing within a practice will help to ensure that the scale is sensitive, as well as increase the
764 confidence of staff concerning the uniformity of its application and the provision of pain relief. The
765 training, and guides placed in pertinent areas would encourage all those involved in animal care to
766 assess the pain on a regular basis, whether they be in veterinary practice or others working with
767 animals in different settings.

768 Assessing pain using facial expression does not require any specialist equipment to be bought, and
769 should be possible to carry out in real time. Many of the scales are concise with only a few
770 measurements needed; the majority have five areas of the face to assess for three possible outcomes.
771 This should mean that the assessment is quick and effective to carry out. Leach et al. (2011), highlight
772 that observers are naturally drawn to the face, and so facial expression scoring takes advantage of this.
773 Once clinical staff are familiar with facial expression scales, the scales should become quicker and
774 easier to use in assessing pain. It is likely that once a practitioner has become familiar with one or two
775 different species facial expression scales, they will be able to apply similar principles to other patients
776 that they treat because of the consistency in facial expression across mammals (Chambers and Mogil,
777 2015).

778 It is important that the facial expression scale should initially form part of a wider assessment of pain,
779 although it could be used alone. Observing the individual AUs of the face gives an indication of
780 potential pain severity, particularly when a total pain score is applied. Observing other areas of the
781 body and the behaviour as well as monitoring physiological signs will give a more rounded picture of
782 the pain experience, including potential causes of pain and where the pain maybe occurring. Once the
783 cause and site of pain has been identified, subsequent assessments should focus on the facial

784 expression of pain, assessing the emotional impact of the experience on the animal. It is important to
785 assess the ongoing state of the animal over time as pain fluctuates (Baliki et al., 2006), monitoring
786 how frequent this fluctuation is, or whether there is a high level of constant pain. It should be
787 remembered that individuals experience pain differently and have different thresholds (Bateson, 1991;
788 Gentle, 2001; Martuscello et al., 2013), different coping abilities (Koolhaas et al., 1999), and different
789 genetics that can interfere with the effectiveness of analgesia (Mogil, 1999; Mogil et al., 1996).
790 Carrying out assessment of the facial expression over a period of time and displaying records of
791 scores alongside the animal, will help to build a better understanding of how the animal is coping and
792 whether there needs to be change in pain management strategy. The current authors recommend that
793 facial expression scoring is not used for patients with head injuries or pathological changes to the
794 head or face, as the AUs displayed may be affected by the trauma itself, and so other measures are
795 needed.

796 Intervention scores which provide guidance on when to give analgesia are still lacking for many of the
797 scales, which again may limit their use in practice and thus limiting when and how pain is managed.
798 McLennan et al. (2016) and Oliver et al. (2014) demonstrated that it is possible to provide guidance of
799 when to consider providing analgesia in sheep and rats respectively, identifying a total pain score that
800 when reached is highly suggestive that the animal is in pain. When assessing the ongoing treatment or
801 monitoring of a patient there also needs to be some guidance as to when a change in score would be
802 relevant. In humans, a change in a total pain score by 2 points or more is considered to be clinically
803 important (Farrar et al., 2001). Further research should effectively determine a threshold and
804 intervention score for each species.

805 Table 3 provides guidelines for best practice for use of facial expression scales as a pain assessment
806 tool in clinical practice. This guide is to ensure the validity and reliability of the current scales that
807 have been developed, and to hopefully encourage the uptake of the scales in clinical practice, as well
808 as by those who are involved in the day to day care of animals. If all staff consistently assess the pain
809 of a patient and record the pain score each time they are involved in any sort of care, it is more likely
810 that signs of spontaneous pain will be recognised (Mogil and Crager, 2004). It will also allow for a

811 continued assessment of the animal's recovery and the effectiveness of any analgesia provided. If
812 clinical, research and animal care staff can be encouraged to use and provide feedback on current
813 facial expression scales, this will enable the scales to be improved and allow key areas for further
814 research to be identified.

815 **6. Conclusion**

816 The accurate assessment and management of animal pain is essential in ensuring good animal welfare.
817 Inability to articulate experience of pain means that the nature of pain in animals remains
818 controversial for some people. However, there is increasing acceptance that vertebrates and some
819 invertebrate animals are sentient beings, capable of experiencing affective states such as pain. Yet
820 pain remains a significant welfare issue. The recognition and evaluation of pain remains a major
821 limiting factor in pain management for humans and non-humans. There is good evidence that facial
822 expression can be a useful, valid and reliable tool for recognising and evaluating pain in humans and
823 other animals. Both the sensory and emotional components of pain have been demonstrated to affect
824 facial expression, which thus gives a true representation of the affective state of the animal. Many of
825 the mammalian species studied to date have similar facial expression responses to pain. Animal care
826 staff need to be trained to use the appropriate scale for the species under their care.

827 There is a need for continued development of the currently available facial expression scales. Further
828 testing is required to ensure the validity of the current scales. In particular, many of the scales need
829 feasibility testing and refinement before they can be fully utilised in clinical and field settings. It is
830 imperative that scientists work closely with clinicians in this testing to ensure continued reliability.
831 Most scales developed to date have been developed using only one or two causes of pain, it is
832 important that the scales are validated for other causes of pain before they are applied in different
833 clinical conditions. There may, for example, be different responses to acute pain and to chronic pain
834 in the same species. Young animals may have different responses from adults. The effect of other
835 affective states such as fear or malaise also needs to be assessed, as these may interact with or obscure
836 facial expression of pain. Future work should also consider whether facial expressions of pain have

837 any communicative function. The development of new scales is needed for other species under the
838 care of humans. Facial expression pain scales are already being used in assessment of animal welfare,
839 but further work on facial expression is likely to see many new applications for this approach.

840

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849 **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

850 There are no conflicts of interest.

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