

Hot Topic: Osteoarthritis

Is your pet a bit stiff or lame lately with the cold weather? Just like us humans, dogs and cats may suffer from arthritis especially when they get older and in cold.

So what are the signs of arthritis?

Dogs with arthritis often show lameness or limping (worsened by exercise), but sometimes dogs will have a stiff joints and gait. Working and athletic dogs, and overweight dogs, will put more stress on their joints and exacerbate the condition. It is important to know the causes of lameness as treatments vary accordingly. Your vets can make a diagnosis based on thorough physical examination and X-rays if necessary.

So what can we do about it?

There are many ways we could help arthritic dogs and cats.

Cartrophen is now becoming a very popular treatment of choice for degenerative arthritis; It is a plant based prescription only medicine that helps to regenerate damaged joint cartilage, prevent further progression of the arthritis and helps joints to produce better lubricant so dogs can feel much better about using these joints. Cartrophen is given as an injection under the skin, weekly for a course of 6 weeks.

Medication wise, there are range of good pain-killers and anti-inflammatories for particularly severe arthritic joints that we can use short term while we instigate other treatment, or long term to take the edge off chronic and advanced arthritis patients. Many dogs and cats have already discovered the benefits - just call us to book in.

Things you could do at home

There is a range of excellent **joint supplements** (neutraceuticals) available in the market; glucosamine, chondroitin, pentosan, green lip mussel extract... The variety and number of good joint supplements are increasing but sometimes the choice may be a little confusing, and beware of dubious products online. Some people use human joint supplements, but the dose rate and the metabolism of humans and canines are not always interchangeable, so it is best to use the ones marketed for animal use only for your pet. **Modifying exercise** is another way you could help with arthritis – limit the activity to a level that minimizes aggravation of arthritis. Low impact is good, just avoid high impact activity. **Weight loss** is another very important factor in reducing the stress on joints. Reducing those calories is important as the metabolism and activity levels slow down with age. Obesity is the natural enemy of joints. As us about the diets we have available now.

What's long-term prognosis?

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative condition and though we can help slow down the process, once the bony change starts taking place, it is impossible to reverse that change. Having said that, medical treatments, diet and exercise modification, weight loss and joint supplements can greatly improve the quality of life for the arthritic dogs and cats.

Call us or come in for a chat with one of our friendly vets and nurses with any further questions you may have for the best care your pet deserves.