

SOUTH EAST COUNTRY VETS

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ARTHRITIS MANAGEMENT

Proactive health management of our ageing pets means they are living longer and healthier lives. As they get older, our pets become susceptible to degenerative syndromes such as arthritis. Arthritis is a joint problem that can reduce mobility and cause pain, dogs being particularly prone. Causes of the disease include breed characteristics (over enthusiastic animals), injury, infection, the body's own immune system, or developmental problems. The most common form of arthritis is called osteoarthritis (osteo = bone; arthr = joint; itis = disease) or degenerative joint disease. Normally, joints form smooth connections between bones and provide a cushion during exercise. Osteoarthritis involves thinning of joint cartilage, buildup of fluid within the joint, and the formation of bony growths within the joint. Over time, this can lead to reduced joint mobility as well as significant pain.

SIGNS AND DIAGNOSIS

Signs of arthritis include the following:

- stiffness after exercise
- joint swelling
- limited movement
- trouble getting up, laying down, walking, climbing stairs or jumping.
- a grating sound in a joint
- wasting away of muscle



Recognizing arthritis in dogs can be difficult because the condition progresses slowly and dogs don't complain about their aching joints. Also, some owners assume that signs of arthritis are 'normal' in older animals. Bringing your dog in for an annual checkup can help your veterinarian identify clinical signs early and start appropriate therapy.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Weight loss, exercise & lifestyle management

- These factors are important in maximizing mobility and muscle tone in an arthritic animal. Gentle walking at a regular pace is all that is required to maintain muscle mass. Off lead exercises such as running, ball chasing and frisbee catching all contribute to excessive pressures on joints that can undo all the good work you have started. Excessive exercise will often lead to an unwanted increased reliance on NSAIDs. Swimming can also be a great way to exercise however it must be done in a controlled environment to avoid excitement.

Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

- There are many types of NSAIDs available with each working as an anti-inflammatory agent for pain relief. Side effects can include gastrointestinal, kidney and liver issues. For this reason, regular monitoring of organ function is recommended, especially in our elderly patients. Most dogs will improve after a single injection or short course of these drugs, however, due to the potentially harmful outcomes; we aim to use them for short term relief when there has been over-exercise, trauma or exacerbation of symptoms.

Pentosan/Cartrophen

- These products stimulate cells in the joint to produce joint fluid and aid in keeping cartilage cells healthy. They also have an anti-inflammatory action and enable optimum blood supply to the affected joints. Overall this makes the joint stronger, better lubricated and slows down degenerative joint disease. Pentosan/Cartrophen have none of the risks of NSAIDs and can actually slow down the arthritic process rather than just mask the signs. The injections are administered once weekly for 4 weeks then given every 1, 3 or 6 months as required by the animal.

Chondroitin & Glucosamine

- The cartilage protective properties of chondroitin and glucosamine are well known in human arthritis and there are many products marketed for use in pets such as Paws Osteocare Joint Health Chews, Sasha's blend, green lipped mussel etc. Used correctly these products can most definitely assist in managing arthritis and maintaining the health of your pet's joints.

4CYTE Canine

- 4CYTE Canine is a revolutionary advancement in joint health for dogs. The product contains *Epiitalis* a plant oil extract that has the ability to proliferate cells for cartilage regeneration which improves overall joint health. It is a premium joint treatment given to many patients including those with signs of age and arthritis, supporting healing after a joint injury or operation and boosts the body's ability to meet performance and recuperation demands in athletic and working dogs. It is safe to take long term, is highly palatable and can be combined with other medications.

Dietary Changes

- Royal Canin prescription diets for joint care and mobility are a complete nutritional approach to arthritis management. These diets use a unique clinically proven level of the omega 3 fatty acid EPA to switch off the gene which causes cartilage degeneration. The balance of omega 3 and 6 fatty acids also provide anti-inflammatory benefits, along with glucosamine, chondroitin and antioxidants to protect the joint against free radicals produced by inflammation. Importantly, they have a controlled energy content to maintain optimum body weight. They are a complete and balanced diet so should therefore be given as the sole diet source. No other omega 3 containing supplements need to be used at the same time. As with all diet alterations a slow change is recommended over several weeks.

Radiology

- X-rays of the affected joints can be useful to confirm the presence and extent of degenerative joint disease. It can also help to rule out bone cancers, periosteal inflammation and fractures. In younger animals it can be particularly helpful in cases where surgical treatment may be appropriate.

This information sheet is not intended as a substitute for a veterinary consultation.

It is recommended that a consultation be arranged with a veterinary practitioner if you have any concerns with your pet's health.