

# WINTER HEALTH - ARTHRITIS AND YOUR DOG

With the onset of cooler weather, dogs with arthritis may be feeling reluctant to jump out of bed in the morning to go for a walk.

Osteoarthritis or Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD) is an inflammatory condition of the joint leading to deterioration of cartilage and reduction in viscosity of joint fluid, which can cause pain and loss of mobility. It can occur in any dog but those most predisposed to the condition include older dogs and those with obesity, stress injuries, infection, improper nutrition or genetic make-up.

The most common joints affected in dogs are hips, shoulders, elbows and knees where the cartilage provides cushioning for the joint as it moves. As the cartilage becomes damaged the bones surfaces begin to rub together causing inflammation, pain and discomfort for your dog.



One big point to remember is that almost never do dogs cry or wince in pain when suffering from Osteoarthritis, so be on the lookout for clinical signs as below.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Stiffness upon rising or laying down
- Limping
- Licking at joints
- Reluctance to be touched
- Reluctance to exercise
- Dragging feet

## TREATMENTS

Arthritis cannot be cured but it can be managed.

We may recommend blood tests and x-rays to better assess the damage to your dog's joints and to ensure that the liver and kidneys are healthy prior to commencing medications.

Treatments that may be offered by our vets include:

- Anti- Arthritis injections - Zydax - which simultaneously blocks the chemical pathways in cartilage breakdown and increases the thickness of joint fluid for better lubrication.
- Medications such as anti-inflammatories which help to reduce pain as well as inflammation.
- New generation nutraceuticals, such as 4 Cyte Epiitlalis and Glyde, that act as natural anti-inflammatories and joint protectants.
- Rehabilitation such as hydrotherapy using an underwater treadmill, or remedial massage.

## **REGULAR WELLNESS VISITS TO THE VET**

By visiting us regularly, we'll be able to conduct a physical examination, evaluate your dog's response to treatments and recommend strategies for on-going treatment and management. Speak to our vets at your next visit to discuss the recommended frequency of your dog's check ups.

## **SUPPORTING YOUR DOG AT HOME**

In between vet visits there are several ways you can help your dog to feel more comfortable at home and to help slow the progress of the disease:

- **Daily exercise**

Although you may need to reduce your dog's more strenuous activities such as chasing balls or playing with other dogs, it is essential to encourage movement to prevent stiffening of joints, weight gain and muscle wastage. One or two short gentle walks a day will provide both physical and mental stimulation.

- **Nutritional support and weight management**

As your dog's physical activity is reduced, their diet will need to be assessed to prevent weight gain and to ensure optimal nutritional support for joints. Prescription diets for joint support generally feature foods which are high in Omega-3 fatty acids and help to reduce inflammation around the joints.

We carry a range of prescriptive diets at Lakeside Vet Centre. Our friendly receptionists are on hand to help you choose the best food for your dog's mobility and joint health.

- **Appropriate bedding**

There are many beds on the market which offer comfort and support for sore arthritic joints. Choose a bed that is firm but supportive (e.g. memory foam) and does not have a 'lip' that could cause your dog to trip over. Beds that are slightly elevated will be easier for your dog to get out of in the morning without straining.

- **Ramps**

Portable ramps and steps can make life a lot easier for a dog that is used to climbing onto the bed or jumping into the car.

### **Do you think your dog may have arthritis?**

To book a veterinary consultation, book online [here](#) or call our friendly receptionists on 9123 4567.