



## **Joint Disease**

Hip Dysplasia and joint disease can become a very painful or even debilitating condition, but there are several things you can do to relieve your pet's pain and slow the progression of the disease. The biggest help you can do for your pet is to keep them thin or get them to lose any extra weight. Weight reduction or management can have profound effects on your pet's condition. Many studies have been done on the role of weight management and the development of osteoarthritis. In some cases, weight reduction alone resulted in significant improvement of clinical signs such as lameness. Other studies show the connection between overweight dogs and a faster progression of osteoarthritis.

When your pet is diagnosed with hip dysplasia or joint disease, several different medications may be recommended. Early on in the course of joint disease, the makeup of cartilage and collagen in joints begins to change. Inflammation and the breakdown of cartilage, the cushioning in the joint, starts to occur. Omega 3 fatty acids, found in Welactin®, can help slow changes in the cartilage, aiding in the reduction of inflammation and helping to prevent the cartilage from breaking down. Glucosamine and Chondroitin Sulfate, Dasuquin®, is another way to support the joints and reduce inflammation. Dasuquin® helps block the enzymes that break down cartilage in the joint. Preventing this breakdown early on will give your pet the best chance at living a normal, pain-free life for as long as possible. This is why doctors often recommend starting these supplements when dysplasia or a "looseness" in the hips is first detected.

Often you may not know your pet has osteoarthritis until he or she starts to show signs of discomfort. At that point, supplements such as Dasuquin® and Welactin® may not be enough to control your pet's pain and a Non Steroidal Anti Inflammatory (NSAID), such as Rimadyl®, may be recommended. NSAIDs block substances that create inflammation and activate pain receptors in the body, therefore providing pain relief for your pet. Like any

other medication, NSAIDS can have side effects, the most common being vomiting or diarrhea. Giving the medication with food can reduce the likelihood of that happening. On rare occasions, NSAIDS can cause serious issues for the liver or kidneys. Bloodwork should be done prior to beginning long term use of an NSAID and it needs to be checked every 6 months to ensure there are no abnormalities and that the medication can be continued safely. If NSAIDS alone don't provide enough pain relief for your pet, another medication such as Tramadol, a synthetic codeine like drug or Tylenol® with codeine, can be added. Tramadol and Tylenol® work differently than NSAIDS by blocking different pain receptors in the body, so it can be used with Rimadyl® instead of replacing it. Some herbal supplements have also shown some effectiveness in the treatment of osteoarthritis. NSAIDS should never be given in combination with steroids or another NSAID.

Medications and supplements aren't the only way to treat osteoarthritis or hip dysplasia. Physical therapy and exercise have also become increasingly important to the treatment of osteoarthritis. Even simple exercises such as walking on a leash, going up and down steps or doing sit to stand exercises can help maintain muscle mass, strength and range of motion in the joints. Special equipment such as underwater treadmills can also be very beneficial for your pet and can be found at some specialty or rehabilitation veterinary clinics. Acupuncture and chiropractic manipulation by trained veterinarians are also available at specialty clinics and has been helpful to some patients. If you are interested in any of these treatments, we can refer you to a veterinary clinic that provides these services.