



SMALL TALK



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Pet Arthritis

With our pets beginning to live longer lives we are seeing arthritis a lot more commonly. Winter is upon us and the cold weather that it brings tends to cause more drastic signs in our pets. But what exactly is arthritis and what can we, as pet owners do to prevent it and keep those that already have it more comfortable?

What is arthritis?

Firstly; it would be handy to know exactly what arthritis is and what can cause it. The word arthritis is Latin and can be split in half. The term "arthro" refers to the spot where two bones meet (i.e. the joint) and "itis" means inflammation. Therefore the term arthritis literally means inflammation of the joint.

The basic composition of a joint involves the end of two bones that are covered in cartilage. The cartilage acts sort of like brake pads over the bones and reduces friction and impact between the bone surface. Connecting the bones are ligaments and the whole joint is surrounded by a joint capsule. This capsule allows for fluid to be kept in the joint which also lubricates and cushions the bones as well as providing nutrients and white blood cells that help fight infection.

All of these above components work together to ensure a well-oiled machine or joint. The issue comes when there is inflammation or damage to any of these components. This damage can be a result of trauma, mechanical damage, infection or a disruption of the immune system. Whatever the cause of the damage the resulting inflammation is the same causing cartilage damage which in turn causes further inflammation. This in turn leads to the joint fluid losing its viscosity/slippery-ness resulting in further cartilage damage and inflammation. This inflammation causes more damage and.....You guessed it further inflammation and so the cycle continues.

How do I know my pet has arthritis?

Clinical signs of arthritis are the same in all pets including pain and swelling of the joint and weight gain as a result of less activity. Often the signs are more obvious in the mornings or after a colder weather snap. The way our pets show arthritic pain can vary between animals.

Dogs often show obvious signs of lameness and can be seen to favor the unaffected joints. Cats however tend to play it a bit cooler and often will not have an obvious limp but will be less inclined to jump up on things and climb stairs. You may notice your previously hunting cat would rather sit in the sun.

How can I treat for arthritis

Sadly there is no cure for arthritis. We can however manage arthritis in a number of different ways.

Weight loss: Any excess weight on an already sore joint is going to cause even more pain so weight management is very important in managing arthritis. It is important that this weight loss comes as a result of BOTH decreased calorie intake and exercise. Exercise increases muscle mass and burns calories which is why it is important in arthritis management.

Diets and supplements: There are special diets and supplements on the market that contain ingredients that reduce joint inflammation.

Therapeutic exercise: As stated above exercise is important in managing arthritis but care needs to be taken that it is not high impact exercise. A gentle walk or a swim are great options. It is important after this exercise your pet doesn't show signs of pain, if this is the case reduce the amount of exercise to a level where there is no pain following.

Medications: there are a few medical options for managing arthritis. If your pet is an older animal then he or she may need a blood test to ensure they are safe to be maintained on some of these drugs. A veterinary consult is required before your pet can go on these drugs.

No matter what type of pet you have if it has arthritis it will be sore. As we now know arthritis is not something we can cure but we can manage the pain to make life more comfortable. If you are concerned your pet is showing signs of arthritis book an appointment now before the weather gets too cold!

When Blue was feeling a bit yellow

Blue, a 12 year old female working dog had been feeling down for about a week. She hadn't been eating but was drinking a lot and had started trembling. When the vets examined her they found her to have a high temperature and yellowing of her eyes and gums. When the whites of the eyes or gums appear yellow this is called jaundice and results from buildup of bilirubin in the blood, a pigment which contributes to the distinctive colour of urine. Bilirubin is primarily dealt with by the liver and so the yellowing of tissue was an indicator for a liver problem. A blood sample was taken which confirmed liver issues. Blue was referred for ultrasound to try and help work out what was going on. On ultrasound a 1.4cm gall stone was seen lodged in the bile duct, blocking it. Blue is a well-loved pooch and her owners wanted to do anything to make her right. She was taken into surgery and the stone flushed from where it was obstructing. Blue is now doing well and slowly returning to her normal colour.

Why do dogs turn yellow?

Bilirubin is a component of red blood cells. When these cells get old they get broken down into the building block components so they can be recycled. The bilirubin gets transported to the liver where it is connected to another particle which is excreted into the bile and then moves into the gut. Some is reabsorbed and taken to the kidney. Bilirubin is therefore eliminated from the body in faeces and urine.

When any one of the above steps doesn't go to plan problems can arise:

- ◆ Occasionally red blood cells which aren't old burst due to one of many pathological processes. There is therefore extra bilirubin which the liver cannot handle and so the animal turns yellow. More serious however is the loss of red blood cells.
- ◆ Liver damage means that the liver can't take up bilirubin and connect it to be eliminated. There is a buildup of bilirubin in the circulation so again yellowing may be seen.
- ◆ Blockage of the bile duct, whether by a gall stone or a tumor results in excess bilirubin which spills back into circulation.
- ◆ Severe infection leads to decreased transport channels in the liver for bilirubin. Infection has to be very serious to cause yellowing and you would tend to see other signs of problems first.

Sinner the Cat

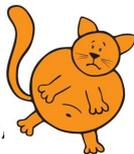
There once was a cat called sinner,
Who always ate far too much for dinner
So his vet begged him to try and get thinner.

But he thought his fat butt was cute,
So he didn't give a hoot,

The vets concerns soon fell mute,
And he shoveled more food down his chute.

Sinner soon realised his mistake,
His blood sugar levels began to inflate,
His joint pain became great
He had to accept his fate,
For now it was too late,
If only he had listened to his mate,
Got his diet straight

He wouldn't have to take tablets daily which he hates!!



Interesting Facts

All octopuses have a head, called mantle, surrounded with 8 arms, called tentacles. All vital organs are located in their head. An Octopus has 3 hearts and their blood is blue in colour. If a predator grabs for any tentacle, they will reject it. Soon after, a new tentacle will grow.

Meerkats are cute little creatures that belong to the mongoose family. They live in arid and semi-arid areas of South Africa. Eagles, hawks and falcons hunt meerkats, but they are not endangered. Meerkats hunt and eat insects, scorpions, small lizards, snakes and eggs. They also eat roots and bulbs. They are immune to the venom of scorpions and snakes



Puffer fish have the ability to ingest huge amount of water (and air sometimes) which increases their body size and turn them into odd-looking ball-like creatures. This is one of the tactics used to scare predators. Almost all species of puffer fish contain toxin (called tetrodotoxin) that can be 1200 times stronger than cyanide.

An Albatross has excellent eyesight and sense of smell. It can find prey even in the dark. An Albatross is a carnivore (meat eater). Its diet consists of different type of fish, krill, crabs and squids. They have a very long lifespan, surviving up to 50 years in the wild

Pet obesity can predispose your pet to a number of diseases including diabetes, arthritis, breathing difficulties and fatty liver. It will also shorten their lifespan and cause any surgery to have an increased risk. Please ensure you are not over feeding your pets as you could literally be killing them with kindness. If you have any concerns we have a range of weight loss options and plans on hand, you need only ask.



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