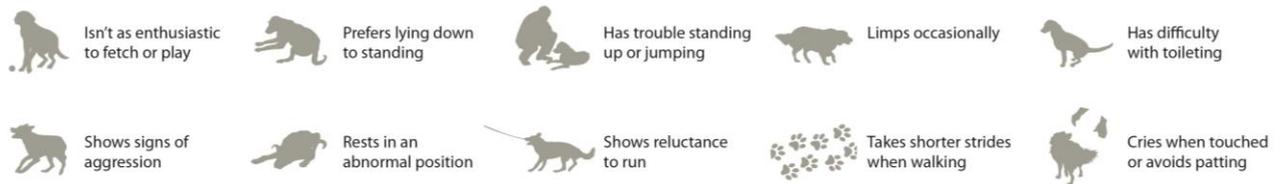


Is your best friend finding it hard to move?

You may think that your best friend is getting old or is just stiff because of the winter chill factor. However, your best friend could actually be suffering from arthritis. Arthritis is a painful and debilitating condition that affects 1 in 5 dogs over the age of one.

Arthritis is no less painful to dogs than it is to humans and can significantly impact their mobility and willingness to play, which ultimately prevents you bonding with your dog. It can affect one or more of the major joints including the hips, knees, elbows, carpus and spine. Once present, it is relentlessly progressive and steadily becomes more severe over time.

If your best friend is suffering from any of the symptoms below, arthritis could be to blame.



While no cure exists for arthritis, the good news is there are many treatment options, which can transform your dog's quality of life, greatly reduce the impact of the condition and allow both of you to regain that bond.

There is also an increasing number of treatments that are designed to assist with improving the health of the joint tissues and fluid. Many of these are natural remedies and have minimal side effects.

The most suitable treatment for your dog will depend on several things, i.e. which joints are affected, presence of ligament or structural damage to affected joint, duration of condition, long term effects, costs, etc.

Surgery

In some situations, surgical treatments may be an option, e.g. with arthritis of the stifle (knee) joint where there is associated joint ligament damage. Generally, they are expensive in the short term but often they can stabilize a joint and so limit the progression of arthritis in that joint. We will discuss this with you if this is an option in your case.



Medical

The main treatment we use is medical. There are two major aims in medical treatment – one is to relieve pain and the other is to limit the degree of joint damage. Both are aimed at improving the quality of life for your dog.

Anti-inflammatory drugs

These are very commonly used in controlling the pain from DJD. Over recent years new drugs have become available which have greater effectiveness and a better safety margin than many of the older types. Many of these older anti-inflammatories were human drugs which we no longer use because drugs have been developed specifically for dogs. The most commonly used of these drugs (the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug or NSAIDS) generally give good control of the pain although there is some variation between animals and drugs. Side effects which can limit the usefulness of NSAIDS are mostly related to gastroenteritis i.e. vomiting and/or diarrhoea. Making sure that medication is given with food each time may reduce these side effects.

Steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (commonly called “cortisone”) are also used, but much less often because long term their side effects may be more of a worry than with NSAIDS. Weight gain is very common with steroidal drugs and this is the last thing you want in most dogs with arthritis. Other body systems may also be affected.

Chondro-protective Drugs

This group of medications is becoming increasingly used and acts by promoting the health of the joint cartilage and joint fluid. They are safe and because of their mode of action, assist in improving damaged joints. We often use them in combination with other methods of treatment.

These agents are available in different forms – some are used as injections, others orally. Some of the oral forms are also available with additional trace elements, minerals and vitamins. These aid in the production and restoration of cartilage to assist in maintaining the integrity of joints.

Weight Management

If your dog is overweight, then we will discuss an appropriate weight management plan. Losing weight reduces the stress on your dog’s joints considerably. The improvement can be huge. Some dogs become pain free and clinically normal just by correcting bodyweight.

Miscellaneous treatments

There are many other medications used in the treatment of arthritis. One of these is green lipped mussel extract. This appears to have chondro-protective and anti-inflammatory effects. Vitamins C & E, kelp and minerals such as manganese, magnesium, zinc, copper and selenium are all important in maintaining joint health and these can be found in some of the supplements we have available.

