



Understanding canine osteoarthritis



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What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis is one of the most common diseases in dogs. It's estimated around 20–40% of dogs are affected^{1,2} – or almost 80% in older dogs.²

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative inflammatory disease, involving progressive deterioration of healthy joints. **This often leads to joint instability, weakness and pain.**

Right now, osteoarthritis remains incurable and progressive, and can have a big impact on you and your dog's wellbeing. However, if caught early and managed well the prognosis can be good.

Signs of osteoarthritis

It can be tricky to spot the early signs of osteoarthritis as changes can be gradual and dogs often express pain in subtle ways. Behavioural changes are some of the earliest and most difficult to identify, whereas limping typically only occurs when the disease has progressed.

Early identification can significantly improve your dog's treatment and management options.

Is my dog at risk of osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis can affect dogs of all ages and breeds, but some are more at risk than others.

Common risk factors:

- ➔ **Genetics.** The most common cause is developmental joint conditions, such as cranial cruciate ligament disease, hip dysplasia and elbow dysplasia. Certain breeds are more likely to develop these conditions.
- ➔ **Body weight.** Excessive body weight affects the development, progression and severity of osteoarthritis. As well as putting extra strain onto your dog's joint, inflammatory factors within fat itself can worsen and progress the disease.³
- ➔ **Injury.** Previous joint trauma or infection can predispose a dog to developing osteoarthritis in that joint. Repeated high impact activities like ball throwing may also exacerbate osteoarthritis or associated pain.

Helping dogs with osteoarthritis

There are lots of ways to manage canine osteoarthritis - every dog is different and needs individually tailored management.

The key goals of osteoarthritis treatment are to:⁴

- ➔ Address pain
- ➔ Reduce inflammation
- ➔ Limit disease progression
- ➔ Improve quality of life



What to look for:

Behaviour and mood

- ➔ Reduced enthusiasm about doing things they used to enjoy such as playing
- ➔ Sleeping more than usual, low mood or reluctance to be handled
- ➔ Licking the affected joints in an attempt to soothe the pain

Sitting and lying

- ➔ Difficulty getting comfortable when lying or sitting, or a change in sleeping position
- ➔ Subtle changes in posture such as a tucked tail and a hunched back

Walking and jumping

- ➔ Less enthusiasm when going for a walk
- ➔ Stiffness or a limp, particularly after resting

Signs of osteoarthritis are unique to each dog and this is not an exhaustive list.

To diagnose osteoarthritis, your vet will ask questions about your dog's behaviour and activities and perform a physical assessment. Providing a video of your dog's movement can be helpful. Imaging such as radiography and/or trial medication may also be necessary.

Speak to your vet or vet nurse if you're worried your dog is showing signs of osteoarthritis.

It's important to take a multi-pronged approach to help minimise the effects of the condition and maximise your dog's quality of life.

Management options include:

- ➔ Weight control and management
- ➔ Modified exercise
- ➔ Environmental adjustments
- ➔ Pain medications (e.g. non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, monoclonal antibodies)
- ➔ Diet and supplements
- ➔ Complimentary therapies (e.g. physiotherapy)
- ➔ Joint injections (e.g. stem cell treatments)
- ➔ Surgery



Stem cell therapy for osteoarthritis

- ➔ Stem cell therapy has gained attention in recent years as a new approach to osteoarthritis
- ➔ Stem cells target joint pain and inflammation⁶ and have potential tissue regenerative properties⁵
- ➔ Stem cells have long-lasting effects (from 3 months to more than 12 months)⁷ and may slow progression of osteoarthritis⁵⁻⁷
- ➔ Using Stem cells in arthritis is much easier and accessible than you might think

Speak to your vet today about advances in stem cell treatments

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