

# Ask the physiotherapist

Muscle and skeletal disorders ...

Pain - Injury- Wear and tear

Arthritis treatment

Dietary supplements

Joint pain

Degenerative joint disorders

Dogs can develop these conditions as well. They can suffer from and be affected by the same types of disorders-diagnoses as humans.

## **What can be done for dogs?**

Physiotherapy has been discussed, various forms of physiotherapy, the choice of method for alleviating pain and tissue irritation, normalising a condition in sick tissue. According to various sources, approximately 1 in 5 dogs in Scandinavia suffer from arthritis, i.e. degeneration or calcification of or around a joint (ref. Veterinary R. Krokfors).

A condition might have been caused by an injury or an inherited joint defect that causes and initiates abnormal degeneration. Obesity and being overweight can also be triggering causes.

Arthritis causes chronic pain that makes itself apparent in the form of limping, stiffness, problems with ADL activities, such as sitting, lying down, walking up or down stairs, and jumping up to various heights, e.g. cars, baskets, chairs, etc. Various activities can worsen the symptoms: e.g. too long walks, uneven terrain, cold, too high a level of activity during a walk.

## **Examination and analysis is important**

This is done by a vet, possibly in collaboration with a physiotherapist and includes: x-rays, determining functional status, degree of joint degeneration, and checking status of surrounding muscle tissue, ligaments and the joint cup.

Some conditions are chronic, i.e. continue over time. Degenerative changes to joints are. One cannot repair this, but one can alleviate pain and try to prevent further degeneration so that the dog can live as painless and normal a life as possible. We all know what pain can do to us over time, it tires us out, saps our energy and enjoyment of life; our surplus energy disappears.

Pain alleviation is important. This can be done with medication using Nsaids preparations for dogs (Rimadyl). Surgery may be indicated sometimes: cleaning and inserting artificial joints. Furthermore various forms of physiotherapy may be well suited to alleviating pain and breaking the cycle of pain.

This liberates the dog, allowing suitable doses of activity that prevent more pain.

It can be difficult to determine the correct level and types of activity, given that you do not wish the activity to cause more pain, indeed you want it to help limit the scope of the pain. Activity plans/diaries can be useful for logging everyday nuances.

Degenerative disorders always cause tissue and musculature reactions around the joint in the form of increased muscle tension, poorer blood circulation, increased intra-articulated compression, which in turn further increase the pain experienced in the region. Preventing the further degeneration of these conditions can include regulating a dog's weight and regular physiotherapy as well as the right types and amounts of activity. Acupuncture is also an alternative that often produces good results. Dogs' bodies must be used otherwise stiffness increases even more, especially when degeneration has been demonstrated and the surrounding tissue is irritated.

Alleviating and preventing the further development of the joint, muscle and surrounding tissue symptoms prevents further degeneration.

### **Health food for dogs – dietary supplements**

What else can one do to minimise, alleviate, reverse and prevent the further development of these types of conditions and disorders in joints with demonstrated degenerative and pain problems?

### **Fatty acids combat rheumatism and degenerative disorders**

It has been demonstrated that fatty acids can have an effect with respect to counteracting the development of degenerative joint disorders. Musculature also benefits from supplementary fatty acids. Relevant ones include Omega 3, Omega 6 and GLA (gammalinoleic acid) as well as antioxidants.

### **Positive effect on joint pain**

Fatty acids both alleviate inflammation and help to build up tissue.

Veterinarians should be able to prescribe these products for dogs that have joint and surrounding tissue disorders.

### **Sustaining mobility, suppleness, and flexibility - dietary supplements**

Glucosamin, chondroitinsulphate, is sold as a dietary supplement and research has shown that it alleviates inflammation and regenerates tissue. It stimulates the increase or normalisation of the body's own joint fluids and cartilage. The job of a joint's cartilage is to function as a shock absorber and cartilage normally undergoes a process of generation and regeneration. Glucosamin is naturally present in all joints, cartilage, ligaments, tendons, cups, and other places.

### **Glucosamin is very important for the maintenance of cartilaginous tissue**

Various studies have been conducted in human medicine that demonstrate the effects of glucosamin in connection with joint disorders, degenerative changes and more. For documented scientific studies. See Medicine, Pubmed: keywords: glucosamin or chondroitinsulphate.

### **Research results from the USA: studies of horses will be published in May 2002**

Empirical based clinical science is receiving feedback on a day-to-day basis from dog owners informing them that dogs are no longer limping and that joint regions are no longer so tender. This means that this is an important supplement in connection with treating disorders and the prevention of the further degeneration of joint problems and of other related structures that are affected. According to veterinary sources (R. Krokfors) research has shown that a daily intake of 1500 mg appears to help increase the production of joint fluids and cartilage.

The results are apparent from a dog's mobility, suppleness, increased flexibility, and springier stride, jogging and running. Glucosamin occurs naturally in the body and is thus not classified as a pharmaceutical. This is an important supplement when it comes to restoration after an injury to or illness in joints and muscles, and getting a dog back on the right track with respect to the condition of its joints, as well as reversing and preventing negative developments with respect to joint disorders.

We recommend that hunting dogs, which both train and work hard, follow this advice as a preventative and curative therapy to keep their joints and muscle in a normal condition. Dogs which have started to experience various joint and muscle problems should be given this as a method of treatment to try and heal the problems, alleviate inflammation and regenerate tissue to achieve freedom from pain and better joint functionality.

Veterinarians and physiotherapists may be able to provide advice concerning recommended levels of activity and intensity with respect to training and using hunting dogs. This may help your dog to avoid ligament injuries and emergency problems after tough bouts of training and hunting.

Want them to stay young for a bit longer? Want them to have better health and a better functioning body? Prevent problems occurring; help them to live a longer and better life for as long as possible.

Good hunting, good training and remember dietary supplements for healthy joints and muscles.

With best hunting wishes

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