



ARTHRITIS

Arthritis is a common condition in dogs. It is an inflammation of the joints leading to stiffness, discomfort and lameness. It is common particularly in Labradors and Golden retrievers. In these breeds the arthritis is primary where the joints, usually the elbow and the hips haven't formed properly as a young dog due to genetic and environmental issues, leading to poor joint conformation and secondary inflammation. Arthritis can also be seen in old dogs of any breed due to secondary wear and tear of the joints.

Arthritis is usually seen in middle aged to older dogs and can be very debilitating. It is important to not simply rely on pain relief if your dog has arthritis as with long term use this can lead to side effects including kidney and gastro-intestinal disorders. There should be a multi-modal approach to treatment to reduce your dog's discomfort and prolong the life of their joints. Arthritis is a condition your dog will have for life and it is progressive. Therefore it is of the utmost importance we do all we can to delay the worsening of any arthritis to ensure your dog can live a long and comfortable life. Arthritis can usually be diagnosed with x-rays at our clinic under some sedation. Ideally before undergoing long term treatment for arthritis we would x-ray your dog's joints to assess the severity of the arthritis and rule out any other conditions.

There are several things to consider when managing your arthritic dog:

1. **Diet** - It is important your dog is on a balanced diet to support its overall health. Please talk to our staff about a diet we can recommend for your dog. Also very importantly your dog must be the correct weight. An overweight dog will result in an increased load on their joints which will speed up the onset and severity of their arthritis. Speak to one of our vets about the ideal weight for your pet and bring your pet into the clinic monthly to use our scales for free so we can keep a weight chart.
2. **Exercise** – Exercise must be controlled and tailored for your dog. It is important to provide light and regular exercise so the joints keep moving without being over stressed. Half an hour twice daily is normally ideal for an arthritic dog but we will assess the degree of lameness or joint changes to help you formulate an exercise plan.



3. **Joint supplements** – Joint supplements are very important to improve the health of the joint. We recommend Nutraquin + which includes several high quality ingredients all sustainably sourced in the UK. It contains Glucosamine HCL at 99% purity and Chondroitin sulphate at 90% purity which work synergistically to maintain healthy cartilage and increase the lubricating qualities of synovial fluid thus delaying the onset of osteoarthritis and reducing the severity. It also contains Vitamin C and Zinc Sulphate required to produce Collagen, which is a key building block of tendons and ligaments. And finally it contains Boswelia, a natural anti-inflammatory agent which has been clinically proven to reduce harmful inflammatory cytokines and lactic acid production by the muscles following exercise.
4. **Hydrotherapy/physiotherapy** – Hydrotherapy and physiotherapy are very important to help maintain good joint mobility and muscle without overloading the joints. We recommend Holmarsh Canine Hydrotherapy in Radstock who are fully trained in hydrotherapy and have a purpose built pool. They only take veterinary referrals so please speak to us if you wish to be referred for this treatment.
5. **Acupuncture** – One our vets Jan Bradshaw is qualified in acupuncture. Acupuncture has been very successful in people and dogs for relieving aches and pains. It is well tolerated and can have remarkable effects on comfort levels.
6. **Cartrophen** – (Pentosan polysulphate sodium) acts on the underlying disease processes causing arthritis by reducing the number of destructive enzymes present in joints and increasing cartilage and synovial fluid production. It has been clinically proven to improve arthritis in 80% of cases. It is in injectable form and your dog will require one injection once a week for 4 weeks. This can be repeated for up to 3 courses a year depending on the severity of the arthritis and in some cases we opt to give it monthly or every other month with top up courses throughout the year.
7. **Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS)** e.g. Loxicam, Cimalgex and Onsior. These are very effective drugs at reducing inflammation and controlling pain. Your dog may be required to be on these drugs permanently if they have stiffness or lameness despite all of the above measures. It may need to be given daily or just on particularly stiff days. We use the safest drugs available and many dogs use them for many years without having a problem. However they can cause gastro-intestinal signs e.g. ulceration and vomiting or diarrhoea so if you notice any of these signs then please stop using the drug and call us. It can also make an existing or developing kidney problem worse. We therefore strongly recommend you bring in a urine sample with your dog at your six monthly checks so we can ensure the kidneys are working well. If we are in any doubt we may also advise a blood test.



8. **Joint replacement surgery** – This is an option available to some dogs with severe elbow and hip disease. It can work very well in the right cases and for this procedure your dog will be referred to Langford Veterinary Services. We will discuss this with you if we feel it may be appropriate for your dog.

In order to manage your dog's arthritis appropriately we recommend a consultation every 6 months. If your dog is on a NSAID drug then please bring a urine sample with you at this time. If you ever have any concerns or questions then don't hesitate to call us at the clinic and you can speak to one of our vets. If your dog has been diagnosed with arthritis you are entitled to a free nurse check every 3 months to discuss your pet's progress and monitor their weight etc