



## CANINE DEGENERATIVE MYELOPATHY (CDM)

This disease, formerly Chronic Degenerative Radiculomyopathy (CDRM), was thought to only affect German Shepherd dogs but it is now known to affect many pure breed dogs including Golden Retrievers, Corgis, Pugs, Boxers, Rhodesian Ridgebacks, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, and Poodles. The cause is currently unknown but there is thought to be a genetic component to the disease. It is usually seen in dogs over 8 years of age. It is a disease of the spinal cord and nerves, causing a gradual degeneration of the nerves with progressive death of the nerve cells. The disease causes a weakness in the back legs which eventually leads to loss of hind limb function and would eventually then lead to loss of forelimb function. It also causes incontinence.

### Clinical signs

- Dragging of the back feet
- Knuckled over hind paws
- Loss of muscle over the back end.
- Wobbly walk or falling over when turning corners
- Unable to use back legs
- Incontinence

**Diagnosis**- There is no diagnostic test for canine degenerative myelopathy. The diagnosis is usually made on the age, breed and clinical signs. Sometimes diagnostics tests are indicated to rule out other causes of the same clinical signs, for example X-rays may be taken to rule out disease of the spine and MRI to rule out spinal cord disease.

**Treatment** – Sadly CDM is a progressive degenerative disease with no cure. However with good physiotherapy, hydrotherapy and exercise regimes their life can be extended and they can have a good quality of life.

**Hydrotherapy** – We recommend Holmarsh hydrotherapy in Somerset. We are very happy to make a referral for you and also put you in touch with a local physiotherapist. Hydrotherapy and physiotherapy help maintain muscle mass which supports the hind limbs.

**Acupuncture** – Acupuncture is performed at our clinic by our vet Jan Bradshaw. It helps relieve muscle tension and improves blood flow to the area, helping to maintain muscle and remove waste products.

**CDRM solution from Hilton herbs** – A herbal formulation aiming to maintain the dogs neurological and musculo-skeletal system.

**Steroids** – Sometimes in the latter stages of the disease short courses of steroids can be helpful.